Of Tripod and Palate

Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China

EDITED BY ROEL STERCKX

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Roel Sterckx
Cambridge, Autumn 2004

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Introduction

Roel Sterckx

Food and foodways provide an effective lens through which to illuminate human life. Its role in ancient and contemporary societies has been the subject of study by scholars working in a variety of fields over the past few decades. Studies that examine food as nutrition or explore the economic and technical aspects of food production through themes such as famine, land use, health, and poverty reflect a long-standing interest by historians and archaeologists in the material aspects of food in ancient societies. Today, historians studying the role of food and commensality in societies in the past increasingly acknowledge an intellectual debt to pioneering sociological and anthropological work.[1] The results have been rewarding: the biocultural relationship of humans to food and eating is now firmly implanted as a valuable tool to explore aspects of a society's social, political and religious make up. For Graeco-Roman antiquity, work on what Peter Garnsey has coined the "food and non-food uses of food" has yielded results hardly digestible in one comprehensive bibliography.[2] Likewise, an increasing number of studies on food, cuisine, and eating in medieval and early modern Europe have seen the light in recent years (Carlin 1998, Bober 1999, Scholliers 2001, Effros 2002); and enduring biblical scholarship on sacrifice and food taboos has recently been supplemented with comprehensive studies on foodways in the Islamic world (Feeley-Harknick 1994; Van Gelder 2000a, 2000b; Kueny 2001).

When asked to identify one aspect of Chinese culture that has characterized so much of the cultural capital it has fostered within its own borders and beyond, a preoccupation with food would no doubt rank among the most likely answers. To quote the late Chang Kwang-chih: "That Chinese cuisine is the greatest in the world is highly debatable and is essentially irrelevant. But few can take exception to the statement that few other cultures are as food oriented as the Chinese" (Chang 1977, 11). Indeed few societies have put more emphasis on the central role of food preparation and food consumption in both a secular and religious context. For many today, the globalization of Chinese culture still begins with the stomach (Wu and Cheung 2002).

The most original contributions to the study of food culture as a biocultural phenomenon in China were initiated by anthropologists (Ahern 1973; Chang 1977; Anderson 1988; Thompson 1988). Much of their work was motivated by interests in the study of kinship as reflected in mortuary practice, sacrificial religion and community rituals. More recently the focus of enquiry has broadened to include the role of food as a marker of social identity or modernity in contemporary China and the Chinese diaspora (Jing 2000; Farquhar 2002; Watson 2004).

It is in a pioneering collection of essays published in 1977, directed by Chang Kwang-chih, that the anthropological questioning of food culture amalgamated with an evaluation of food semantics in Chinese historical sources, both texts as well as archaeological evidence. Around the same time encyclopedic surveys compiled by Shinoda Ōsamu, Hayashi Minao and others brought together invaluable data for the material and economic history of food in a diachronic and/or synchronic perspective. Chang's volume has remained the main introductory text on the subject in the English language to date. It combines a descriptive account of food habits and attitudes toward food within a sociohistorical context from the Shang period through the end of the Mao era. Although its methodology, thematic organization (a chronology), and use of sources reflect the state of the field three decades ago, it will no doubt remain a foundational collection of data on Chinese food culture. A number of scholars, mainly in China and Japan, have continued to explore culinary history from a technological and economic perspective.[3]

In the meantime, as the bibliographies appended to the essays in this volume suggest, new sources have become available for the study of food culture and the intellectual approaches adopted to examine both transmitted and newly recovered sources have evolved. The past few decades have witnessed the discovery of numerous hitherto unknown textual and archaeological materials excavated from tombs across China. To give due account of the variety and sheer quantity of new texts and objects would require several separate volumes. In addition, interpretative work on food culture in cognate disciplines and focused on other civilizations, past and contemporary, has inspired scholars of China to channel their attention to the subject beyond cataloguing its material and technological history, although great advances continue to be made with respect to the latter (Huang 2000). To highlight just a few significant developments, students of early China have now at their disposal detailed tomb inventories, sacrificial and divinatory records and, most recently, have even been alerted to the discovery of a Western Han gastronomic cookbook. Steady advances in Dunhuang studies have allowed scholars of medieval China to compare social life and habits in the western periphery with those of heartland China. Scholars of Chinese Buddhism have gained an interest in the material aspects of life both among monastic and lay communities. Likewise, historians of Chinese medicine no longer rely solely on the transmitted medical canon for their analyses but have embraced a great variety

of sources including mantic texts, calendars, religious texts and anecdotal literature.

Chang Kwang-chih concluded the introduction to his pioneering volume with the observation that, as far as food culture is concerned, "continuity vastly outweighs change in this aspect of Chinese history." This continuity, Chang noted, was self-explanatory and a proof of "the change-within-tradition pattern of Chinese cultural history" (Chang 1977, 20). Scholars today are generally more reticent to discuss China as a timeless and monolithic civilization, both in terms of its cultural geography as well as its social stratification. Yet few scholars today would dispute that Chinese food culture shows material as well as conceptual continuities that stretch over centuries (although the mushrooming fast-food culture in Chinese urban areas today might soon convince the skeptic of the opposite). A meticulously stage-managed Chinese banquet today still echoes some of the precepts and rules of etiquette set out in ritual codes traceable to early imperial times; food offerings are still central to Chinese religious practice.

The aim of this book is to explore some of these continuities in Chinese food culture not so much by examining the material history of food and eating but by exploring ideas about food, cooking, banqueting, and diet within the social and religious context of the communities in which certain foods were consumed or eschewed. In broad terms, the authors in this volume were invited to address the role of foodways in China's religious traditions and reflect on the ways in which the culinary arts, food, food sacrifice, and eating influenced philosophical and religious perceptions and the ritual setting in which such ideas were expressed. As editor, I have hovered between the bogus and real cook in *Lüshi chunqiu*: "If a cook adjusts and blends dishes not daring to partake of them himself he may properly be considered a cook. When a cook adjusts and blends the dishes and then eats them himself, he cannot be considered a real cook" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, "Qu si" 去私). No theoretical or methodological framework was earmarked to guide our inquiry other than, where possible, we would refrain from digressing into an account of data on food production, food technology, and the biology and economics of nutrition. Each author approaches the subject within her or his period or field of expertise based on a personal selection of representative sources that bear on the subject. The menu on offer is, therefore, partly chronological and partly thematic. It presents studies dealing with China from the Bronze Age through the classical, medieval, and late imperial periods, while at the same time assessing food culture in China's main religious traditions: "Confucian" ancestor worship and sacrificial religion, religious Daoism, and Buddhism.

The offering of sacrificial foodstuffs, the banqueting of guests, and the ritual distribution, preparation, and consumption of food and drink were central to the social, political, and ritual structure that characterizes premodern (and to some extent contemporary) Chinese society. What unites late Shang and Zhou bronze vessels with Buddhist dietary codes or Daoist immortality recipes is a poignant testimony that culinary activity governed

not only human relationships but also fermented the communication between humans and the spirit world. Cooking, the offering and exchange of food, and commensality were among the most pervasive means of social and religious communication in traditional China.

Food culture provides a good case study that helps us break down the enduring preconception that Chinese religious practice can be meaningfully elucidated when seen as belonging to one of the so-called three great traditions articulated above. As several chapters in this book show, such pigeonholing is artificial at best. Since religious thought and devotional practice were intricately tied to the social and political relationships that structured human activity, alternative foodways did not superimpose themselves as revolutionary innovations that gained social acceptance merely because of doctrinal imperatives. Food and eating united or divided human society, the realm of the ancestors, and the spirit world. Yet the motives underlying particular food choices were complex since feasting or fasting implied abstaining from or celebrating ideologies, virtues, and social aspirations that often had little to do with religious conviction.

Ancestral worship and sacrifice had been the mainstay of socioreligious and political life in China since the late Shang period. They would continue to assume a central role despite the emergence of the great medieval institutionalized religions of Daoism and Buddhism that offered paths to salvation that no longer solely depended on ancestral approval or the mediation by a feudal lord, emperor, or lineage elder. For centuries, meat and blood sacrifices, communal banquets and drinking gatherings, and ritual food exchanges had been at the heart of the social fabric of pre-imperial and early imperial society. It proved to be a substrate of religious practice that would inspire debates on the role of food and sacrificial worship in China for centuries to come.

During the Bronze age, as Constance Cook describes, sacrificial food offerings were part of an intricate symbolical gift-economy. Presented in mortuary feasts both inside the tomb and above the ground in the ancestral temple, they served to accompany the dead on their journey from the corporeal world into the afterlife and reaffirmed lineage hierarchies among the ancestors in the eyes of the living descendants. Such sacrificial rites forged new or affirmed existing relationships among the living descendants. Sacrificial rites, as Michael Puett argues, were also used to purposefully create fictitious ancestral and spirit hierarchies and construct genealogical continuities among otherwise unrelated humans and natural phenomena. The sacrificial food exchange and the prominent role played by officiants and ritualists involved in the preparation and execution of the required culinary procedures reverberated beyond the sacrificial altars and, as I explore in my paper, furnished metaphors for the art of government. One example is the emergence of the typecast minister-cook as sage adviser in political discourse. So deeply engrained was the vocabulary of ritual sacrifice that by Warring States times, according to Romain Graziani, adepts of self-cultivation

had started to interiorize much of its imagery into their alternative therapies for physical self-cultivation and spiritual enlightenment. The alcoholic spirits of the altar had been transformed into quintessential energies that had to be sought within one's body and one's self. That a tradition insisting on the importance of nourishing the physical and moral self with refined cosmic energies would profile itself against a contemporary culture heavily preoccupied with saturating spirits in tombs, temples, and shrines, illustrates how religious food culture had become fertile ground for contesting voices and the development of spiritual alternatives.

Indeed several contributors in this volume emphasize that culinary regimes in China were not necessarily adopted for intrinsic or, what Robert Campany calls, "internalist" reasons such as the physical benefits associated with a particular diet or a prescriptive moral code that denounces or promotes the consumption of certain foods on doctrinal grounds. More often food choices were inspired by external values. According to Campany, seekers of immortality in early medieval China abstained from grain-based cuisine partly because they sought to oppose a cluster of cultural values and institutions associated with grain, most notably, the ideal of a grain-based agricultural and sedentary civilization whose cultural values they sought to transcend by living in mountains and ingesting natural herbs and substances from the wilds. Poo Mu-chou takes this further and argues that the quest for elixirs of immortality in early medieval China can only be understood against the background of evolving medical ideas and, what he terms, the social psychology of the period. Vivienne Lo examines how the culinary arts influenced medical perceptions of diet and how alimentary philosophies that had dictated the diets of rulers and sages were used to justify or denounce certain medicinal usages of food.

Religious Daoism and Buddhism instigated major changes in Chinese religious food culture. Both denounced blood sacrifices and both prescribed the adoption of a dietary regimen as an aid to spiritual salvation. Yet advocates of cuisines of transcendence and Buddhist vegetarianism needed to invoke continuities with the past in order to propose new dietary regimes and rituals. Terry Kleeman shows that the Daoist communal kitchen ought not to be seen as a radical departure from the village based sacrificial banquet, but rather as a transformation of a traditional lineage-based communal sacrificial ritual dominated by elites into a rite that stressed a more inclusive form of communion with divine beings. Contesting an indigenous tradition in which blood sacrifices and meat consumption had acclaimed great ritual significance, seekers of Buddhist enlightenment also struggled to justify and canonize their dietary choices. John Kieschnick and James Benn show that doctrinal precepts only partly guided Buddhist polemics on vegetarianism and alcohol temperance and that much of the debate was focused on accommodating doctrinal taboos against the demands of a society in which participation in communal banquets and the consumption of meat and alcohol had been associated with ritual decorum and social

status for centuries. While the resulting dietary compromises may account for documentary evidence of meat-eating and ale-swigging monks, it is striking that, as Vincent Goossaert explains, Buddhism was not the main moving force behind one of China's most long-standing food taboos, namely the refusal to kill bovines and eat beef. By late imperial times, dietary regimes and sacrificial codes that had for centuries been associated with more or less distinguishable Confucian, Daoist, or Buddhist principles and practices, had merged into an eclectic popular religious culture in which normative ideologies were often superseded by locally inspired or historically transformed custom and habit.

Allow me to close this brief introduction with an observation by Lin Yutang (1895–1976): "How a Chinese spirit glows over a good feast! How apt is he to cry out that life is beautiful when his stomach and his intestines are well-filled! From this well-filled stomach suffuses and radiates a happiness that is spiritual. The Chinese relies upon instinct and his instinct tells him that when the stomach is right, everything is right. That is why I claim for the Chinese a life closer to instinct and a philosophy that makes a more open acknowledgment of it possible" (*The Importance of Living*, 46). Lin's enthusiasm reassures us that there are many areas in life where food and philosophy meet. Given the size of the subject, this volume is necessarily selective and limited in its scope and coverage. If anything, I hope that, in addition to bringing some enlightenment on the topics under discussion, it will reinforce our recognition of how intricately food culture is intertwined with all aspects of life in Chinese societies past and present and how much more remains on the menu to be explored. Whether in Warring States treatises on the art of government, Han manuals on sexual cultivation, medieval texts on mental and physical temperance, or late imperial sectarian pamphlets denouncing foreign invaders, food is omnipresent in reality, in *simile* and in metaphor.

Notes

1. To mention only the obvious classics: Lévi-Strauss (1965, 1969); Goody (1982); Douglas (1966, 1987); Harris (1986).
2. Garnsey (1999, 144–48) contains a bibliographical essay that underscores this point.
3. See the bibliographical review in Wilkinson (2001). See also Xu (1999); Li (1997); Nakamura (1999); Wang (1993); Wang (1994); Yao (1999); Lin (1989); and Zhang (1988), a list that no doubt represents only a sample of the vast literature that increasingly appears through regional or provincial publishing houses.

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CHAPTER ONE

Moonshine and Millet: Feasting and Purification Rituals in Ancient China

Constance A. Cook

The social role of food in Bronze Age China (the first two millennia BCE) is defined both by the relationship of a person to the supernatural and by the control of the bronze industry to produce vessels for sacrifice. Food production and human fertility were seen as gifts from Heaven—the realm of the High God and their ancestors. The descendants returned the gifts through sacrifices. The "cuisine of sacrifice" in ancient China united all generations of a family—dead, living, and unborn—into a whole, a community built on a continuous exchange of food and gifts throughout time. The living fed their ancestors, who in turn blessed their descendants with food and children. This cycle of nurturing between the natural and supernatural worlds was maintained through a mortuary feast system tied to a hierarchy of lineages. As far as we can tell from material cultural remains and paleographic records, the system peaked during the Late Shang (1200–1046 BCE) up through the Western Zhou (1046–771 BCE) periods. After that, the effect of multiple competing lineages during the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States periods (475–221 BCE) forced localization of the system and numerous changes in the relationship of an individual to the divine.[1] Lineage hierarchies had broken down and cults of disenfranchised elite men recreated the terms of the relationship as well as the image of the supernatural as peopled only with ancestral spirits. During this time period, bronze sacrificial vessels lost their primal role in furthering the transcendence of the deceased's spirits into the realm of the ancestors or Heaven. By the Imperial Age, beginning with the Qin in 221 BCE and continuing into the Western Han in 206 BCE, bronze vessels were demoted to bronze cook pots and canisters; their role as conduits for spirits was replaced by other items such as spirit trees and lacquer mountain-shaped incense burners, connected to cosmic myths of rebirth (the Fusang tree in the east) and transcendence over death into immortality (Mount Kunlun in the west). This decrease in value was due to changes in

the economic system which was no longer tied to Zhou mortuary ritual and in the belief system which no longer limited access to the divine by way of lineage links to royal ancestors.

Evidence for the cuisine of sacrifice in ancient China has been preserved in archaeological remains and in texts, both paleographical texts (excavated from tombs) and transmitted texts. These records allow us to partially recreate primary and secondary mortuary feast rituals in which bronze vessels played a primary role in the movement of the soul to Heaven, a process that seemed to take several annual ritual cycles. The richest material for understanding the role of food as catalyst in the process of transcendence is found in bronze inscriptions and in material cultural remains, particularly tombs, of the late Shang through Western Zhou period.

Food sacrifices lost much of their potency after the Western Zhou period, when the ritual fabric of ancestor worship was torn. The Zhou gods had failed. By the Warring States period, descendants of Zhou ritualists and other roving experts, "guests" patronized by local courts, advocated a variety of other methods, such as diet, exercise, meditation, dance, or magical practices that did not require accessing Heaven through a hierarchy of ancestors with the defunct Zhou ancestors on top. The mortuary feast rituals were adapted to local custom and need; while primary mortuary rituals involving tomb feasts were still practiced with the goal of transcendence, secondary rituals were adapted to new hierarchies and competing ideologies.

During the Bronze Age, we witness a political economy originally based on group ancestor worship change into a society concerned with individual salvation. The early exchange economy (in which prestige goods linked to mortuary ritual were awarded and traded) began, during the Spring and Autumn period, to develop into a more market-oriented economy, one in which, by the Warring States period, coins and goods were used in trade for the comfort of the rich elite and without the religious justification for the transfer of wealth (evident in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions).[2] In the older economy, gift-giving and exchanges occurred during ritually prescribed memorial events linked to ancestor worship. These took place at sacred sites with feasts in which the living reaffirmed the social hierarchy. The Zhou hegemony collapsed under the weight of competing lineage rituals, many of which were influenced by cultures previously peripheral to the Shang and Zhou belief system.[3] In this new economy, feeding the ancestors was not the focus of food production and the authority of political figures was not reliant on the proper performance of secondary mortuary rituals. Indeed, cults of dispossessed elites and non-elites recreated the rituals of spiritual communion into non-lineage–related rituals for personal spiritual transformation (Puett 2002, 80–121).

This chapter focuses on the earlier system (one that linked to Zhou mortuary ritual) and attempts to reconstruct the feast ceremony primarily from excavated artifacts representing two types of sacred sites, one below ground and one above ground. The below-ground site represented the primal stage

of the mortuary ritual, the burial of the deceased in the tomb. The above-ground site represented the secondary stage of the mortuary ritual, the celebration of the transition of the deceased into an ancestor (Chesson 2001, 3, 8). Both stages involved the layout of feasts and both reveal the role of food in transcendence as it was perceived up to the Warring States period.

The Mortuary Feast

Mortuary feasts are communal events in which the dead and the living participants share food in a ritual space. The ceremonies were times in which social relations, on earth and in the realm of the ancestors (Heaven), were readjusted. Food, placed in bronze vessels, symbolized the flesh that transmutes in and out of the unseen world through birth and death. The living presented grains and meats—refined through fermentation and cooking—in bronze vessels decorated with symbols of transformation through sacrifice (Childs-Johnson 1989, 1998). One mortuary feast was set up in the tomb at the time of burial to initiate the journey of the soul to Heaven and others set up in a temple to facilitate and celebrate the arrival of the soul in Heaven. Ancestors were worshipped in groups and individually in mortuary feasts in a variety of sacred spaces, times, and sizes—ranging from the spirit feast in the tomb to public celebrations outside. Large ceremonies in ancestral temples involving lineage founders were occasions also used to mark adjustments in the established hierarchy of ancestors. During the Western Zhou period, the largest mortuary feast events would have been hosted by the Zhou royal family, as their ancestors represented the top of the hierarchy.[4]

The reaffirmation of social identity and hierarchy was a primary function of the feasts,[5] one that relied upon the rank of the ancestor's soul in Heaven. The feasts symbolically assured the continuity of the group as a corporate body and also guaranteed continued prestige within the community. The larger the feast, the greater the status of the host. Also, the more lineage ancestors in Heaven the greater the host's social authority. During these secondary feasts, the host gave to subordinates awards and gifts that reaffirmed and increased their social rank relative to the host and his ancestors. One of the most valuable gifts was the right to cast a sacrificial vessel, for this gave the recipient access to the realm of the ancestors. Local rulers controlled the award of wealth to individual lineage representations and the production of bronze vessels. They awarded the individuals during public ceremonies for service in the ruler's economy with items that the lineage representative could use to host a lavish ceremony for the ancestors. Hence, the cycle of gift-giving involved the entire political economy of the Shang and Zhou periods.

Gift recipients memorialized the events in bronze inscriptions. Memorial records praising the recipient's merits were often cast into the eating surfaces of the vessels to communicate this information via his ancestors to Heaven. Ancestors sat "to the right and left of the High God" (*shangdi* 上帝) and could influence the fates of their descendants. Feeding the ancestors not

only had the immediate effect of keeping the ancestors well and happy (in their own world of lineage competition), but also gave the living a chance to acknowledge their debt to their ancestors for their own birth and sustenance and to pray for progeny to continue the cycle of sacrifices. The dead—in exchange for the food and the public recognition inherent in the secondary mortuary rituals—continued to protect their descendants, feed them, and provide children. The ceremony was the sacred "filial" duty of all descendants, and the vessels used by them for eating, drinking, and ritual purification were the instruments of exchange, contract, and promise.

Evidence for the above-ground feast is found in contemporary inscriptions on the bronzes vessels used to present the offerings. The fact that these vessels were often buried in tombs in specific sets and arrangements provides us some information on their symbolic use underground. Scholars have compared this archaeological and paleographical record with transmitted textual records associated with the followers of Confucius, sometimes referred to as the Ru,[6] and have found that while the two types of records reflect different social and political environments and concerns, they do reveal enough shared content to merit comparison or to show continuities.[7]

Gift-giving, on both a large and small scale, seemed to be an essential aspect of the mortuary feast system. The terms for the different feasts used in Western Zhou inscriptions were later confused in the transmitted texts of the Warring States period. This reflects the collapse of the earlier Zhou system of patronage, a move away from the distinction of the public state feasts from the more private lineage feasts, and the loss of gift-giving as a fundamental aspect of the economy. This change no doubt evolved after the Zhou royal lineage was forced by invaders from the west in 771 BCE to flee the city of their ancestral temples, Zongzhou ("Ancestral Zhou" 宗周) in the Zhouyuan 周原 region of the Wei 渭 river valley (Shaanxi), and take up residence in their eastern administrative capital, Chengzhou ("the Created Zhou" 成周), in modern Luoyang (Henan).[8] From this point on, the feeble Zhou descendants were the wards of one nearby state after another, each with its own lineage traditions. There ensued an intensifying situation of one lineage competing with another for Heaven's favor and authority, originally bestowed on the Zhou in the form of a "Command" (*ming* 命). People who formerly paid tribute to the Zhou now battled openly for its legacy, each pretending to know better than their neighbor the "Way of the Former Kings." The Ru, for example, promoted their eastern version of the Zhou way and claimed to be authorities on the proper performance of social rituals, including those of feasting and sacrifice.[9]

Although the Ruists clearly had a political agenda, the fact that they attempted to preserve records of the past is valuable for the study of food ritual as long as we recognize the temporal bias of their editors. Aspects of the early feasting ceremonies are delineated in their texts in terms of political rank and bureaucratic function. Among the rules for seating arrangements, movements, drinking toasts, food service,[10] and ablutions, there is little reference to the spirits (*shen* 神). These rules of etiquette cover such

movements of host, guests, invocator, and "corpse" (a young male descendant impersonator of the ancestor) during different stages of the feasts (drinking, archery, eating, and musical entertainment), which clearly reflect a belief in the role of spirits, yet the texts avoid discussion of that role. This could be due to the Confucian desire to "keep their distance" from the spirits, but is more likely due to the increasing influence of cosmic schemes in which natural forces predominated instead of a hierarchy of ancestral spirits.

Actors, Time, and Place

The archaeological record from the late Shang up through the Warring States period is intimately tied to mortuary practices. From oracle bones found in temples and bronze inscriptions found in tombs (or in caches) to the disposition of the feast vessels in the tombs themselves, we can draw a picture of the role of food in the early feasting context in which ancestral spirits were active participants.

Since antiquity, ancestors had been associated with astral light. In the earliest known system, the dead were assigned one of the ten signs, associated with a ten-day or "sun" cycle, as both a posthumous name and sacrifice day (Allan 1991; Keightley 1999). The royal dead were also referred to as "gods" (*di* 帝). From Western Zhou inscriptions, we know that lower-ranked dead were referred to by social titles, such as "Sire" (*gong* 公), a title of higher political and ritual status than the more common "Elder" (*bo* 伯), "Father" (*fu* 父), and "Mother" (*mu* 母). Distant ancestors were referred to as "Ancestor" (*zu* 祖) and designated as "brilliant" (*huang* 皇), "blazing" (*lie* 烈), or "luminous" (*ming* 明). While summoned they were described as "Greatly Manifest" (*pixian* 丕顯) and upon arrival they were described in terms of repetitive musical sounds, such as "So Solemn" (*mumu* 穆穆). By the end of the Western Zhou, ancestral spirits were rarely summoned individually, but rather in groups of "Former Accomplished Ones" (*qian wenren* 前文人) or "The One Hundred Spirits" (*bai shen* 百神). They were imagined as seated "up above" on either side of the High God staring sternly downward. By the Warring States period, the ancestors were clearly delineated as recently deceased and founder gods, with many of the latter sharing mythical characteristics with nature deities, including those associated with grain and agriculture (Cook 2004b).

Sacrificial days were determined by divination in coordination with a sixty-day ritual calendar tied to astral phenomena. This calendar consisted of ten sun signs, later called "stems," and twelve other signs of unknown symbolism, later called "branches," that rotated like interlocked gears so that only after six cycles of the ten sun signs did the calendar start again at the same day. A particular day was marked by the movement of a stellar device used to measure time, the *chen* 辰, perhaps seen as in the form of a dragon (Cook 1990, 60–61).[11] The sun sign was particularly auspicious if it landed during certain days of moon phases, the first few days after the new moon,

for example, or at the beginning of a calendrical cycle. By the Han period, the sixty-day cycle was linked to more complex correlative systems involving hours of the day and cycles of five natural agents manifested in five gods, five planets, five elements, and five tastes all connected with musical notes and divination hexagrams (Major 1993; Kalinowski 1998–99; Cook, forthcoming). Ritual texts preserved by the Ruists show influence of belief in natural agents in their sumptuary rules regarding the matching of taste, color, and type of food or ale with the season and day as well as the gender and status of the food recipient. It seems likely that a simpler system coordinating the sacrifice day to lunar phase and season was active earlier, but there is no material evidence that the earlier Zhou food service varied in presentation except as a reflection of the deceased's social status. Even fourth-century BCE divination rituals to ancestors divide the animal sacrifices strictly according to rank: black water buffalo for the highest ranked, gelded male pigs next, and then a variety of pigs, sows and piglets, rams and ewes, or white dogs for others. As a further distinction, these animals might be offered up whole, dried, or as a food offering with alcohol. A great soup was prepared annually for royal ancestors (Boileau 1998–99; Cook 2004b).

Early mortuary rites were divided into "inauspicious rites" (equal to primary mortuary ritual and linked to the ghost of the body, the corporal and most dangerous aspect of the deceased that remained in the tomb) and "auspicious rites" (equal to secondary mortuary ritual and performed to guide wandering spirits to the temple; Li 1991, 237–53).[12] Bronze inscriptions were often cast at the beginning of a new reign and at the end of a three-year period, suggesting that for the highest elite, gift-giving and feasts were aspects of both primary and secondary feasts.

While "inauspicious rites" were likely those performed during burial and upon the tomb after burial, "auspicious rites" took place in ritual buildings. The king or patron awarded the right to cast bronzes in the first year of a new reign during Great Feast days for founder deities in the Great Temple (*da miao* 大廟) or Ancestral Temple (*zong miao* 宗廟).[13] The king, or patron, traveled to local founder temples, also termed *gong* 宮, either connected to a branch of the royal house or located on Zhou's perimeter.[14] Being the dominant lineage using the temples, the Zhou people were one of the few lineages during the Bronze Age capable of inscribing commemorations of these ceremonies onto bronze sacrificial vessels; they clearly controlled access to prestige goods for much of the Western Zhou period (1046–771 BCE).[15]

Kings or other local patrons awarded local lineage representatives for their "merit" (*gong* 功). "Merit" accrued to a lineage over time through deeds of warfare or ritual for the patron or hegemon, became *de* 德, a term best understood for the Western Zhou as a kind of Heaven-provided life-force or power (a likely predecessor of the Warring States notion of *qi* 氣 "vital essence," cultivated by individuals seeking transcendence). In the earlier context, *de* was an internal force connected to Heaven's Command (*ling* 令 or *ming* 命, also meaning one's Heaven-determined "fate") that was

inherited from one's ancestors in a rite-of-passage ceremony (Cook 1993, 2003b). The more *de* a person acquired, the more gifts and higher status he achieved in society. High status for an individual was impossible without an equally honored ancestor. The accrual and granting of *de*, then, was a reciprocal process whereby the energy of life was sustained and reaffirmed during mortuary feast rituals.

A primary character in the feast and dance was an actor, a second generation descendant, who played the "corpse" (*shi* 尸) dancing, singing, and eating (Carr 1985; Hu 1990; Li 1992; Kern 2000). The ancestral spirits "ascended and descended" (*shang xia* 上下) into the temple ritually centered between Heaven and Earth (Wang 2000, 46–47, 71–74). By the third century BCE, dances with choreography linked to founder worship involved lines of dancers dressed in furs and white silk skirts who moved in alternation and with orchestrated music and song (Cook 2004a). From songs preserved in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes), we know that both song and food were used to evoke the ancestral gods (Cook 1990; Falkenhausen 1991; Waley 1996, 225–323; Kern 2000).

Evocation also involved alcohol. A set of matching Spring and Autumn Period inscriptions on libation vessels from a warlord of the southern city state of Cai 蔡 suggests that ecstatic dancing was an important part of paying respects to the descended ancestral spirits. During one first-year ceremony, a local Cai lord paid his respects to the Great (or Heavenly) Command. He worshiped "those ascending and descending from above and below" "without tiring" by serving the Son of Heaven (possibly the royal Zhou descendant kept at Chengzhou during the fifth century BCE). Cai used his reward from the Son of Heaven to make for his eldest daughter ("Grand Eldest Ji 姬-lineage woman") a dowry *pan* 盤 (basin) and *zun* 尊 (vase) vessel set for ritual purification in honor of her marriage to the king of Wu.[16] The inscriptions specify that the vessels were for the use of purified alcohol offerings when paying her respects during the Autumnal "Tasting" ritual and coterminous ancestral temple sacrifice (*changdi* 嘗禘), when the formal re-ranking of ancestral spirit plaques every three years (to accommodate the newly deceased) took place. The warlord's daughter performed a ritual of prescribed movements in order to "endlessly receive the ancestor's divine aid." In these movements, she was to imitate the behavior of Zhou King Wen's Mother,[17] possibly her patron saint (and fertility goddess) as the Ji-lineage was mythically linked to the Zhou people. There followed a description of her performance: a swaying (*youyou* 遊遊) presentation of "Awesome Decorum" (*weiyi* 威儀) with a "Spirited Face" (*lingrong* 靈[頌]容) to repeated musical sounds (*mumu* 穆穆 "Solemn, so solemn"). The inscription ends with her father's exhortation for her to make a good mate for King Wu and not to offend the ancestors so as to have a rich abundance of children.

While we cannot be sure that ecstatic dances described on later regional bronzes actually took place in early Zhou temples, the discovery of inscribed oracle bones remaining in one of the rooms of a Zhou building

does confirm the connection of the site with communication with ancestral deities. These divination records show a concern that the deities approve the king's movements: his presentation of sacrifices and his military "correction" of peoples in all four cosmic directions.[18] Blood sacrifices recorded included human captives, water buffaloes, goats, and pigs. On auspicious days of the lunar month, people offered fish from the Wei river and animals caught in the wild. They performed exorcistic rituals to Cheng Tang 成湯, the founder deity of the eastern Shang peoples, a still-powerful presence for the Zhou people of that time (around the late tenth to early ninth century BCE). These rituals were recorded on tortoise and cattle bones for ancestral approval. Approval of the king's merit by the ancestors and his ability to distribute wealth through awards of his subordinates confirmed the continued high status of all participants, both dead and alive. The merit records, followed by prayers to the ancestral spirits, were cast into the vessels and were in essence "consumed" by the participants. Like the sacrificial offering, the eulogies "intoned" (*yue* 曰) and the merit reports "announced" (*gao* 告 or 誥) were "heard" by the ancestors through the process of consumption. Sacrificial bronze vessels were a vehicle for communication between the natural and supernatural worlds. The food offering not only served to sustain the spirits as they transformed into ancestors but bribed them for continued blessings.

Food and Drink

From the oracle bone record of sacrifices dating from about 1200 to 1050 BCE and from bone fragments found in the sacred city of Yinxu at modern Anyang (Shandong), we know that the Shang already had an abundance of food sources and paid particular attention to color, gender, and type of animal in their sacrifices to the ancestors (in exchange for good harvests, hunts, and military ventures, essential to produce the requisite numbers of sacrificial victims). Although they generally served animals to their ancestors in the sacrificial vessels, there is some evidence of human parts used as well (Xia 1984). During the Shang, human sacrifice of captured peoples was frequent and numerous. This continued through Warring States times although with less frequency and fewer victims. As Burkert showed for the ancient Greeks, the act of killing and sacrificing victims to appease the ancestors replicated the cycle of death and life. The violence of sacrifice (and war involving the capture and killing of human victims) recreated the act of death in a controlled ritual setting (Burkert 1983; Lewis 1990). These sacrificial bodies were placed in vessels decorated with masks representing the transition of self from living into ancestor (Childs-Johnson 1998) and were yielded up to the ancestral spirit as a symbolic sacrifice of the living descendent. The sharing of this meal by the living transformed this semi-symbolic cannibalistic feast into a communion of the living and the dead.

The capture of animals during a hunt—like a good harvest—was an auspicious sign of ancestral blessing. The primary sustenance for ancestors

and descendants alike consisted of meat and grain, particularly millet. One variety, the Broomcorn millet (*shu* 黍), is well known as a source for making ale. People since the Neolithic period had cultivated several varieties of millet and had access to barley, wheat, and rice (wild and cultivated) as well. Hemp was used for food and cloth making. Soybeans are included in what later Ruist texts defined as "the five grains" (*wu gu* 五谷), and were likely a staple as early as the Shang period.

The earliest graph representing the Zhou site (周), its people, and the importance of grain production dates from the second millennium BCE. Written first on Shang tortoise and cattle bones, the graph consisted of a square divided into four quadrates, each with a dot in the middle —a dot that some scholars believe represents planted seeds of grain. The link between the Zhou and agriculture in texts continued for more than a millennium with the Zhou founder deity, Hou Ji 后稷, in later myth seen essentially as a grain god. "Hou" was a title indicating the rank of controller and "Ji" was a name meaning millet, farmer, or the deity of fields.

The most common grains to the Zhou area were barley and two types of millet, followed by wheat and rice (Luo 1995). A Western Zhou period bronze sacrificial vessel dating to the early eighth century BCE reads as follows:

> Elder Grand Master Initiate (Bo Dashi Xiaozi 伯大師小子) and Elder Sire Father (Bo Gong Fu 伯公父) made a grain vessel selected from the metals of Hao and Lu. Its metal is "Grandly auspicious: Black and Yellow." Fill it with grain cakes, non-glutinous and glutinous rice, and millet. We use it to summon, feast, and serve the Ruler King. (We will) use it to summon the Many Deceased Fathers and Many Older Brothers and use it to pray for endless long life and good fortune. May their sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure it and use it to present mortuary offerings. (Ma Chengyuan, vol. 4, 219)

The ritual colors of black and yellow reflected not only the colors of the vessels but also of the grain sacrifices themselves. The primary grain sacrifice recorded on inscriptions since the Shang period was *zheng* 烝 (or *deng* 登, a term that may also have referred to steaming or brewing; Li 1993, 155–58). This involved the seasonal presentation of grains to founder deities and to the cosmic Four Regions (Allan 1991, 75–103), much drinking of grain alcohol (such as *chang* 鬯, described in later texts as a fermented "black" millet beverage), and the presentation of animal sacrifices to the founders. By the end of the Western Zhou period, the eating or "tasting" part of the ceremony was distinguished as *chang* 嘗 and by the Warring States period, the *zheng* and *chang* ceremonies were distinguished only by the season of their annual presentation, the former during winter and the latter in autumn, possibly a late reflection of the contrasting use of fermented versus fresh grains (Liu 1989, 511–13).

The distinction between the seasonal sacrifices and the importance of grain sacrifices as a primary symbol of state creation in ancient times is reflected in later texts and is the focus of rituals at the altar of Soil and Millet (*sheji* 社稷), described in later texts as a mound of "five-colored" earth with a tree planted in it.[19] According to the fourth century BCE chronicle *Zuozhuan* 左傳, a state or city–state was symbolically annihilated once its altar of Soil and Millet was destroyed. In the "Wang zhi" 王制 (Royal Regulations) chapter in the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), preserved by the Ru, we learn how the Son of Heaven (the Zhou king) led the seasonal sacrifices in the main temple to Heaven and Earth, while the local lords presented their offerings at their individual altars of Soil and Millet (*Liji*, 4.40–50). In this text, the local elite (*daifu* 大夫) simply presented the Five Annual Sacrifices (*wusi* 五祀). These were associated with the Shang ritual calendar and limited to royal kings until the end of the Western Zhou period (later the number "five" linked it to the Five Gods, mythological founder figures). In the "Wang zhi" chapter, the assignment of fields for the cultivation of grain matched the levels of sacrifice expected and the rank of the participants. Meat for sacrifices was either gathered during seasonal and ritually prescribed hunts or from specially cultivated "penned sacrificial animals" (*lao* 牢), a practice that included horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep and that can be traced back to the Shang period. Care was taken not to over hunt animals, particularly during spring, and the meat was given as presents to guests after the feasts (Lewis 1990, 30). Animal sacrifices were offered at the Altar of Soil and Millet by those assigned fields. Landless elites simply presented non-meat offerings: "The common people, in the spring, presented scallions; in summer, wheat; in autumn, millet; and in winter, rice un-hulled. The scallions were set forth with eggs; the wheat with fish; the millet with a sucking-pig; and the rice with a goose" (Legge, vol. 1, 226–27).

Studies of grain alcohols associated with the Western Zhou period suggest a sensitivity to not only grain type, but also to color and degrees of refinement. The production of *jiu* 酒 "ale" (not a fruit-based wine) was certainly state-controlled. Although malted barley was known, it seems a type of millet was the grain of choice. Millet *jiu* and a fragrant variety (*yuchang* 鬱鬯, possibly yellow, and added to kill unwanted bacteria without killing the yeast)[20] were highly valued and dispensed by the king as awards in fancy lidded bronze containers with handles (*you* 卣) for use in the recipient's lineage mortuary sacrifices. This type of award often preceded the gift of ritual clothing, weapons, or land and was often followed by an award of jade emblems or cups.

The names of other fermented grain beverages associated with the Zhou but not mentioned in bronze inscriptions are preserved in the *Book of Songs* (Ren 1992, 65–75). "Spring *jiu*" (*chun jiu* 春酒) was a rice alcohol that was started in the winter and was ready by springtime. "Fine *jiu*" (*zhi jiu* 旨酒) was used during large feasts for toasts with rhinoceros horn cups among the many guests against a background of musical entertainment, singing, and dancing. There is some debate as to whether this was a grain *jiu* or a fruit

"wine." According to myth *zhi jiu* was so intoxicating and delicious that it caused the downfall of nations. A clarified millet beverage (*chi jiu* 饎酒) was presented to the ancestors on auspicious days for worship. Others include a red-colored *jiu* named *ti* 醍 and a grain mash possibly fermented called *zi sheng* (written either 粢盛 or 齍盛)—sometimes the two were referred to together as *zi ti*, a type that was presented in the temple hall, whereas a form called "settled" or "clarified" *jiu* (*cheng jiu* 澄酒) was for those "below" (presumably seated on mats outside of the central hall and altar).

Ritual texts refer to the Five Doses (five types or stages of alcohols, *wuji* written 五齊 for 五劑), which, according to later commentators, divide up into "muddy" and clarified types and may represent the division of the brewing and distilling process into five steps: (1) "floating measure" (*fanji* 泛齊); (2) "sweet alcohol measure" (*liji* 醴齊); (3) "jar measure" (*angji* 盎齊); (4) "red measure" (*tiji* 醍齊), and (5) "settled measure" (*chenji* 沈齊) (*Zhouli* 1/3: 9.48; Ren 1992, 71–72). In other words, the grain was first soaked in water, then heated to produce sugars, then the fluid was poured off into a jar where it either gathered natural yeast from the air or had yeast added, then was steamed or frozen to separate the water from the alcohol, and finally strained. Generally, scholars do not believe the Chinese were able to control the brewing process well enough to distill the ale into finer alcohols until the medieval period. It seems likely that "sweet alcohol" beer was produced quite early and perhaps in large jars or even "pools"[21] for distribution during public harvest ceremonies, such as for example the *feng* 豐 ceremony mentioned in a few early Western Zhou inscriptions. Since the graphs for *feng* and *li* 豊 (> 醴) were written similarly, it is likely that the great ceremony was simply a Beer Festival in honor of the grain and ancestral spirits who made it possible. This *li* beer, presented in bronze-lidded vases (*hu* 壺), was classified by later commentators as one of the muddy varieties of *jiu*, whereas the "jar," "red," and "settled" *jiu* were clear types (*qing jiu* 清酒). At the very minimum, these latter varieties were likely strained through woven sieves, examples of which have been found in Warring States tombs.[22]

The ancient Chinese balanced the heating and straining of the grain mash in large clay bowls over lobe-legged pottery tripods (*li* 鬲) that form "steamers" (*yan* 甗). These vessels have been found since antiquity and could have been used to steam food as well as process grain mash. Bronze steamers may have been reserved for more formal ceremonies. While all sorts of pottery basins and jars remain that could have been used to process beers (and vinegars), implements used to collect the condensed liquid to produce liquor do not seem to be preserved in pottery and bronze and are presumed to not exist for this time period.

The most common animals used in Shang sacrifice besides humans were cattle, pigs, sheep or goats, deer, dogs, and chickens. Staple meats consisted of water buffalo, hogs, and four types of deer including the Chinese musk deer, the source of a coveted perfume in ancient times. The regular meat diet was complemented with horse, hare, wild rodent, badger, beer, and tiger. More exotic meats included elephant, panther, ape, fox, bear presently

found in the Wusuli River Region, rhinoceros, tapir, cat, goat, antelope, vole, whale, and a huge variety of birds, fish, and mollusks (Li 1993, 195).

The shape of the Shang cooking vessels gives some idea of preparation methods. Meat was roasted, stewed, dried, and pickled. Grain was fermented, cooked, and possibly ground (there is no tradition of leavened bread as far as we know, as cooking was done over mud stoves or pit fires). It is likely that even elite women ground their own spices or took care of their own allotments of salt. We know this from the mortar and pestle buried with an elite Shang woman, Fu Hao 婦好, whose social roles included military leader, huntress, landowner, and lover of King Wu Ding 武丁. The beverages were fermented in large ceramic jars, and the food was cooked and served in bronze. People ate from lacquered wooden dishes, clay bowls, and baskets. Their millet was possibly cooked in steamers with hunks of meat and a range of leeks, water chestnuts, hawthorn, dates, and pine nuts when available.

We can get some idea of the range of foods used in the feast from the better preserved contents of fourth-century BCE Chu tombs, found in modern Hubei, along the Han, Yangtze, and Huai river valleys.[23] Chu tombs had stores of dried meats, fruit, peppers, and nuts. Tomb inventory texts from this time period boasted a rich diet for the dead (however it is not clear that everything recorded was actually put into the tomb). The inventory text from a tomb in Baoshan, north of the metropolitan city Ying 郢 (Jiangling), describes the bronze vessels used as well as a menu of dishes (Cook 2004b). In the section "Metal Vessels of the Dining Room" (*shishi zhi jinqi* 食室之金器), the text lists a variety of vases, caldrons, ladles, decorated jars for grain mash, cups, grain vessels, serving dishes, beverage containers, and cups. The next section, called "Food of the Dining Room" (*sishi zhi si* 飤室之飤), includes baskets, pottery jars, and lacquered wooden containers: baskets of spiced dried meat, dried grain, and non-spiced meat or fish slices; jars and containers of mincemeats made of birds, fish, or other honeyed meats; and containers of honey, scallions, chives, water chestnuts, honeyed plums, and grain mash (likely preserved for beer production in the afterlife). The third and last section of the text describing the feast is called "Eating Baskets for the Dining Room" (*sishi suoyi shi gong* 飤室所以飤箕). Double and single sets of baskets contained a cooked meal: died piglet, spiced dried meat, steamed pork, roasted pork, honey sweets, rice sweets, fried chicken, roasted chicken, fried fish, chestnuts, white-stone pear, *fuci* 梟茈 root (an edible black root with purple sprouts), bamboo shoots, mulberries, water chestnuts, ginger, water chestnut leaves, dried pears, hammered dried meat, and *pisi* 僻死 bird (possibly a large duck).

The "dining rooms" in Warring States–period Chu tombs were generally the eastern chambers of five-chambered tombs with the coffins placed in the central chambers with the head of the deceased pointing toward the rising sun in the east. In earlier tombs, the "dining room" was not so clearly demarcated. It usually consisted simply of an arrangement of vessels on a pounded earth rim that surrounded the coffin, generally around the area of

the deceased's head. The relationship between the head, where the spirit likely emerged, and the nearby feast suggests that entertainment of his ancestors was one of the first activities to which the deceased had to attend.

The Feast of the Dead

Both temples and tombs were sanctified spaces used for communication with the ancestral spirits. From the layout of the underground feast preserved in tombs, we can get an idea of the role of the vessels and food offerings in above-ground mortuary feasting rituals for which material evidence no longer remains. As with the feasts above ground, the display of wealth represented social status. Over time, the underground banquet included an increasing number of musical instruments (bells, chimes, zithers, and ocarinas made of metal, stone, wood, and clay), so that by the Warring States period, we get the impression that music superseded food as the primary mode of communication with the ancestors.

The bronze feasting vessels placed in tombs are classified by archaeologists according to their presumed use for either liquids or foods. Although this distinction can be detected in the early arrangements, mixing of the two categories was also evident. Containers for liquids included storage containers, heating vessels, pouring vessels, vessels used in drinking, and vessels used in ritual bathing or for ablution. Containers for foods included cooking vessels, heating vessels, and serving vessels.

Drinking and food vessels placed in the tomb settings varied in shape, décor, type, and quantity (of each type) over time. Variations in these sets reflected changes in the substances presented to the spirits and perhaps fundamental changes in the ritual itself (Rawson 1990, 1999; Bagley 1999). While the table setting (on mats or squat lacquered tables) inevitably included dishes made out of pottery, wood (carved and then lacquered), and woven reeds, the vessels arranged for presentation of beverages and foods for the feast participants as preserved in elite tombs focused on the presentation of bronzes. Lacquerware no doubt was also included from early times but has not been preserved well until late Warring States period tombs. The major states during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods continued the earlier Zhou and Shang traditions, but gradually replaced bronze as the primary prestige item in tombs with lacquerware or even pottery copies. While pottery and lacquerware copies of bronze styles are common in late Warring States tombs, both types seem to have evolved from ancient traditions of their own that did not include the same styles as made in bronze. For example, the pottery types seem to include from early on storage jars for mincemeats and beverages as well as vessels that could have been used to manufacture and serve beverages. The lacquerware, on the other hand, was used not only to store and serve foods, but also to store other precious items such as silks, combs, and other personal items.

The Warring States period trend away from bronze as the primary material used to present feasts can be explained as a shift away from the Zhou

focus on the bronze vessel as the primary mode of communication with the ancestral spirit. An earlier cultural shift occurred during the Western Zhou period when a Shang focus on the use of drinking vessels was slowly replaced by a focus on food vessels. Ru-preserved texts and an early Zhou bronze inscription known as the Da Yu *ding* 大盂鼎 include warnings by Zhou leaders against the excessive drinking traditions of the Shang. The Zhou may have considered the ecstatic state achieved through alcohol during the ceremony by the Shang problematic (and, indeed, perhaps alcoholism had become a problem among the elite, causing weak leadership and ultimate political downfall). However, alcohol remained an essential ingredient of the feast throughout the Bronze Age. A focus of the presentation of grain as a food, rather than fermented into an ale, was complemented during the ninth century BCE by changes in vessel décor and the introduction of bell chimes to the underground ceremony (Rawson 1990, 1993). The source of this cultural shift is a subject for debate. The Zhou homeland was in northwestern China (in contrast to the Shang in the northeast) where different grains and animals were available. New vessel types also suggest different cooking methods, including roasting or grilling. The Zhou had been in contact with many people of different cultures, nomadic peoples in the Northern Zone, peoples to the southwest settled in the Chengdu plain of modern Sichuan, and peoples to the south and southeast down the Han and Yangtze river valleys who later influenced the rise of the powerful Chu state. By the ninth century BCE, Zhou tastes may have been a hybrid of Shang and other local traditions. The Zhou state was also at the peak of its power, a time when they asserted the primacy of their own ancestral deities and founders. The assertion of their own ritual style strengthened their social identity, particularly in the face of neighboring peoples who were ambivalent subjects.

As sites preserving the primal mortuary ritual feast, recently excavated Bronze Age tombs provide an important material record of the primary stage of the ceremonial cycle. The arrangement of the vessels and their different types reflect the relative importance of drinking, eating, and bathing or ablution for the transcendence of the soul. These three types of vessels exist in various shapes, styles, and number throughout the Bronze Age. Their imagery reflects a belief in flight and metamorphosis (Childs-Johnson 1989, 1998). Their arrangement suggests the immediate necessity of the soul emerging from the cocoon of his coffins not only to drink, eat, and bathe, but to entertain "guests," quite likely the ancestral spirits who would guide him to Heaven.

Most tombs in the famous burial ground of the late Shang kings near modern Anyang have been looted over time. One relatively modest burial, belonging to the royal woman Fu Hao, was discovered intact, filled with valuable bronzes, jades, and other objects, including a number of people sacrificed presumably to act as guards and servants in the afterlife (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan 1980; Childs-Johnson 1983; Rawson 1993; Bagley 1999). Nothing has remained above the ground other than the foundation

of the temple above her tomb, but inside we see a vast abundance of artifacts including an array of animals carved out of jade that accompanied her person in the coffin along with a splendid feast set out around the coffin chamber. Hemp cloth–wrapped bronze vessels for the feast had been laid out on the pounded earth rim surrounding the layered and lacquer-painted coffins. The tomb was aligned approximately along a north–south axis with round- and square-shaped drinking, cooking, and serving vessels spread around every side except on the southern rim.

While the majority of the vessels in the underground mortuary feast showed the importance of drinking to transcendence, food service, on the other hand, seemed to be more associated with the body of the deceased. On top of the coffin had been placed jade food service vessels (*gui* 簋), historically associated with serving grains, and a white marble water buffalo. Fu Hao's own participation in these rites was indicated by the two ornately carved and turquoise inlaid ivory cups placed in her coffin.

One of the distinguishing stylistic features of the vessels of this period was the tendency to use a mask décor (known as *taotie* 饕餮 "glutton") composed of a variety of wild and domesticated animals—water buffalo, deer, elephants, tapirs, birds, sheep, tigers, and, of course, dragons (Childs-Johnson 1998). The eyes of these masks peep out from the centers of the highly decorated sides of the vessels, giving the viewer the sense that the vessels themselves embodied the ancestral or spiritual presence. Although scholars argue about the meaning of the ubiquitous mask décor, there is no question that the décor is a clue to the role of the bronze sacrificial vessel in sacrificial ceremonies to the ancestors (Whitfield 1992). Since these ceremonies were concerned with the movement of the deceased into the ancestral realm, the mask likely symbolized metamorphoses (Childs-Johnson 1998). Although the Shang oracle bones refer to the ancestral spirits as "guests" (*bin* 賓), we know only from later inscriptions and songs, that the "hosts" (*zhu* 主) of these ceremonies were responsible for summoning the ancestral gods down from their astral residences. Whether or not these spirits were envisioned as residing in the vessels or swaying drunkenly around with the dancers (as suggested in a later song) either embodied in the descendants or without bodies is hard to say. According to later songs, food aromas were one method of enticing ancestral spirits. The similar nature of these songs and aspects of the ceremony to parts of early bronze inscriptions suggests that some version of this performance was quite ancient.[24]

By the time of the Ruists, bronze vessels were no longer decorated with masks, and, while their snake and bird décor may have represented flight and transition, these later vessels did not have "eyes." The notion of transcendence, however, was transferred to other objects. The decoration of the body itself may have been a continuous symbol of transformation. In Zhou and later tombs, a jade mask was worn over the face of the deceased and the bodies were covered with elaborate animal-patterned scale-like jade pendants strung together with jade beads also depicting animals.[25] By the end of the Zhou period, the bronze, itself, ceased to represent the transforming

bodies. By the Warring States period, the vessel décor vacillated between being quite plain or vibrantly alive with writhing snake-like dragons (So 1995, 1999). The mask image moved into sculptures found in southern tombs during this period. The "Dining Rooms" of later Chu tombs often contained wooden sculptures with skull-like death masks or faces (with deer antlers and hanging tongues), no doubt derived from the composite masks of earlier times. These sculptures may have represented a spirit guardian or guide for the deceased (Childs-Johnson 1998; Cook 2004b). An alternative notion is that this face, representing both death and the spiritual ascendance over death, was a metaphor for the process of an almost cannibalistic consumption of the living by the dead, and—through the use of the vessels by the living—by the living of their dead. This symbolic incorporation of self, ancestor, and progeny (represented by the inscribed prayers for eternal progeny to continue the sacrifices), then provided for a communion between members of the entire lineage over all time. This idea is materialized in a famous and much discussed Shang-period alcohol container depicting a dragon-tailed tiger (whose body is decorated with a composite of animals and a mask) in the act of consuming a man (Childs-Johnson 1998, 52–55, 168). The notion that vessels both consumed the dead and gave birth to ancestors is suggested by other contemporary vessel décor representing a human head emerging out of a womb shape created by the mouths of two tigers. The depiction of this birthing image on an axe blade used to decapitate sacrificial victims links this image and the use of bronze to processes of life and death (Chang 1983, 62, fig. 25). These bronzes show clearly that late Shang and Zhou period vessels represented more than simply containers for food and drink. They played an active, almost maternal, role in the rebirth of the deceased into an ancestor. The shared sacrificial bodies of animals dismembered and cooked into stews (or laid raw on the pounded earth rim around the coffin as bones in some tombs suggest), like the vessels in which they were cooked and served, symbolically represented the change in status rendered on the part of the recently deceased as well as his descendant. The sacrificial victim also acted as a substitute for the host's own body as a sacrifice to his father or mother. The mutual consumption of these sacrificial bodies during the ceremony was a cannibalistic symbol of mutual incorporation of shared identities. The shared sustenance of grains, considered the direct result of ancestral blessing, assured the continuing existence of the lineage through the cycles of life and death.

The feast as a communal event of consumption continued after the end of Shang hegemony but with a few stylistic changes that represented different sumptuary rules and cooking methods. Archaeologists recently excavated an extensive burial ground dating from the early to middle Western Zhou period near the modern town of Baoji 寶鷄, Shaanxi (Lu 1988; Rawson 1990, 1999). Situated in the Wei River valley just west and south of the Zhou core area, the feast arrangements discovered in the largest of these tombs reveal local versions of the traditions followed by the earlier eastern peoples. In the Zhuyuangou section, an earlier section of the burial ground,

tomb no. 13 belonged to a man of high status. Buried in an attached chamber to the man's left side was a woman buried to face him. On the ledge behind her were four giant-sized food pottery storage vessels (animal bones have been found in vessels of this type in many tombs). The main spirit feast was displayed on the ledge opposite, to the man's right, and a smaller feast to his left next to the woman's head. The storage vessels found in this and other tombs reveal the long period of sustenance necessary for the deceased. Also important was the joint burial of men and women, suggesting that social reproduction, or at least sexual entertainment, was one aspect of the afterlife.

The importance of human sacrifice for the comfort of the deceased in the afterlife is evident in a set of three attached tombs in a later section of this graveyard; two are attached as a single burial of the main tomb male occupant and a woman, and one (of another woman) was added later over the northeast corner (Lu 1988, 270–384; Rawson 1999, 419–22). The bodies of all occupants were laden with numerous carved jades including animals, scepters, discs, handle-like implements, cowries, masks, and a variety of necklaces. Secondary mortuary activity above the graves was evident from the abundance of animal bone, pottery shards, and ash in the fill over the tomb complex. This tomb had a number of lower-ranked people of different sexes and ages buried to accompany the main occupants, a couple, on their journey. Door guards included a female whose body had been mutilated, burnt, and buried in the ramp and a teenage male at the coffin chamber entrance. On the ledges around the couple's tomb were storage jars and pits with buried chariot wheels pressed on top of the bodies of two children and a young man. Other pits held a teenage boy and a six-year-old child. The later attached burial likewise, had a young child in a pit on one side and an adolescent girl on the other. The image of a tomb as a chariot occurring elsewhere in China confirms the sense that the dead are conceived of as going on a journey, one that was long and perhaps dangerous (requiring weapons; Cook 2004b). The burial of children suggests that either they belonged to the dead woman and were sent to follow her into the afterlife or were perhaps slaves or captives, sacrificed to assure a sense of familial abundance or fertility in the afterlife. At the minimum, to arrive in heaven with a retinue of lower-ranked beings no doubt raised the status of the main occupant. One gets the sense that just as the tomb itself was considered a "home" for the corporal soul, the space occupied by this family in Heaven must have also involved some sort of residence.[26]

A large bronze feast setting was found in a jumble in the southwestern corner of the man's burial. If we compare the vessel types with those of the earlier tombs described above, we see further evidence of the basic Zhou trend to replace drinking vessels with food vessel sets and more bells. The composition of the smaller vessel sets and the absence of staffs and drinking vessels placed near the woman's head confirm the idea that she was there to serve the male occupant and not necessarily expected to travel on her own. We find caldron-style food and cooking vessels for meats and of *gui*-style

grain service vessels (from contemporary inscriptions, we know that the Zhou of this time period cast *ding* and *gui*—meat and grain vessels—as sets) and the remains of lacquerware serving dishes. The vessels of the woman in the later tomb consisted of this same basic set but with the addition of tri-lobed cooking vessels, a steamer, a basin with a tapir-like pouring vessel with it, several unique serving dishes, one with bird handles and partially constructed of wood and containing crane bones.[27] Several vessels reveal newer cooking methods: a caldron with a pan attached underneath for hot coals and a dish with holes over an open-work stand for smoking the contents. The tomb also included pottery storage jars, ladles, and the bronze upper half of a figure wearing a trefoil crown with rounded hands that had once carried poles or rolls of some sort of disintegrated soft material. This figure, like later tomb figurines, was likely a servant, guard, or a ritual aide. According to inscriptions in the later tomb, the food vessel sets were cast for presenting sacrificial offerings to the spirits of her ancestors and deceased father at the ancestral hall of Sire Ling (*Ling Gong zongshi* 夌公宗室) in exchange for good fortune and protection. These vessels suggest that the women were expected to run into deceased members of their natal lineage and had to be prepared to feast them.

While food presentation was clearly the focus of Zhou sacrificial feasts, the presentation of alcohol as well as ritual bathing implements remained essential aspects of the service. The traditional beverage containers (*zun* and *you*) were generally replaced with large lidded *hu*-style containers (Rawson 1999, 433–35). A set for washing including the basin as well as a pouring vessel (*yi* 匜) clearly derived from earlier animal forms. Variations on the Zhou traditions are evident in late Western Zhou and post-Zhou burials belonging to peoples of states that rose to power during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Northern examples from the late Western Zhou period tombs in the ancient burial ground of the Jin people reveal not only the Zhou emphasis on the *ding-gui* meat-grain set but also bronze storage boxes, alcohol containers, antique drinking vessels, and the *pan-yi* (basin and pouring vessel) bathing set. The inscription on one *hu* notes that it was made for the presentation of the *li*-type of sweet beer. A number of the vessels from these tombs had legs composed of naked slaves kneeling or squatting in the act of lifting the obviously very heavy vessel (Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 1994, 12–14).

An elaborate early Warring States tomb dating to the fifth century BCE belonged to a local warlord of Zeng (Zeng Hou Yi 曾侯乙) who was connected politically (and possibly by marriage) to the rising state of Chu. In this tomb, consisting of four chambers, the central and main chamber was the site of the underground feast. The main occupant and eight women were buried in a chamber attached to the eastern side of the central chamber.[28] Thirteen more women were buried in a chamber attached to the western side. The contents of this tomb clearly show the influence of a tradition in which music, not just food, enticed the ancestral spirits to the feast. In warlord Zeng's tomb, the larger space of the central chamber was marked out by stands of

chime bells and chime stones which surrounded an open space on three sides and which had clearly been used by musicians and entertainers. The vessels for food consumption were crammed in rows against the southern wall. Small lacquer tables with their own settings were in the middle for guests.

The female victims in the western chamber may have been the service personnel who played the instruments, cooked the food, and filled the serving dishes, whereas those buried in the eastern chamber with the warlord were likely his personal servants, serving him wine as well as dancing, singing, and having sexual relations with him.[29] The female bodies add a sexual element to our consumption equation, confirming the role of the fertility rites in the mortuary feast, represented since antiquity by women and grain, both linked to reproduction of the corporal self (Kilgour 1990, 1–50). In this tomb, the women were in charge of the feast as well as musical production. Both food and music summoned the gods who then danced with the host, drank, and consumed the feast (cf. Kern 2000).

Large vats or deep basins and *yi*-style pouring vessels functioned as bathing vessels (designated for "washing hands," *guan* 盥). Although there are no Western Zhou examples of vessels specifically designated in inscriptions for "washing hands," it is likely that the activity existed even in the Shang period when a set of vessels owned by a Shang *ya* 亞-official in charge of "washing hands" was cast.[30] Drinking and bathing in alcohol may have been viewed as complimentary forms of inner and outer purification rites self-preparatory to facing the spirits (Ke Heli 2003; Cook 2004b). An *yi-pan* set and a set of "bathing vats" were located among the cooking and food vessels along with a large covered basin and a pair of *hu*-vessels. Interestingly, a bird-headed staff was placed in among the bathing vessels suggesting that the spirit must use this apotropaic device or guide while he prepared for the feast.

Finally, a bamboo tomb inventory text was placed in the northern chamber with lists of horse and chariot equipment, weapons, and armor necessary for the journey of the spirit. Given the number of ancestral deities, nature spirits, and ghosts recorded as the potential cause of illness and death in later divination manuscripts, the journey to heaven through the supernatural "wilderness" likely involved sacrifices and battles with numerous ill-omened influences (Cook 2004b). It is likely that he did not travel alone, but was escorted by the descended ancestors who attended the feast as well as some of his female attendants (there were also stone-carved attendants placed inside his coffin). The inventory text in this tomb only mentioned weapons and did not list the preparations set out in a "Dining Room." The earliest texts listing food offerings are found in tombs of the third century BCE and later. These tombs, belonging to local elites, were also equipped with weapons, chariot pieces, and ample food supplies for the journey.

Conclusion

Food during the Bronze Age in ancient China played a critical role in the transcendence or flight of the deceased from the corporal world into the

ethereal realm of the ancestors up in Heaven. Bronze vessels, like wombs, transported the symbolic flesh and grain from one stage of existence into the next. Alcohol and music from the earliest time period were also essential to the process. Once a spirit emerged from his coffin, before he entered the "dining room" or court, he purified himself inside and out with grain-infused waters and ales. Carrying jade and a bird staff, he initiated the feast. Music sounded. The guests arrived, feasted, and then took off back to Heaven. The deceased and his entourage had to follow in his carriage powered by phoenixes and dragons.

Feasting rituals during the Bronze Age took place in temples above the ground and in tombs below the ground celebrating the passage of the spirits of the deceased into Heaven. Until the Western Han period—and the abundance of lacquerware and other goods found in the set of tombs at Mawangdui (Changsha)—few tombs belonging to the Warring States period can surpass warlord Zeng's for attention to the mortuary ceremony. By the later half of the Warring States period, anti-Ruist cults called for moving state economies away from the traditional focus on rich burials, music, mortuary ritual, and ancestor worship. The break-up of old lineages and the rise of usurping rulers forced the group-feasting rituals to become disassociated from rulers and even to migrate to religious cults composed of the disenfranchised elite. Purification or cleansing rituals eventually transformed into rituals of abstinence and meditation performed before spirit worship or as part of immortality cults, involving giving up grains and meats—two highly prized Zhou cult foods—as essential to eternal life. The internal alchemy required a personal physical processing of a balance of temporal and material cosmological influences. In a sense the adepts of these cults acted as the hosts in corporate groups no longer composed of lineage members and the extended family. Like the grandson who impersonated the dead in the role of "corpse" (in a sense consuming the dead one into his own body, the dead one also consuming him), the later adept absorbed kinetic "energy" or "breath" (*qi*) into his body, circulating it until he was able to "release his corpse" (*shijie* 尸解),[31] leaving the inherited meat and fluids of his physical self perfectly preserved in a cave much like the earlier hosts who had left them in tombs. Once free, these souls entered the realm of the immortals inhabiting the sky or magic mountains, appearing and disappearing to the mortal eye, much as the ancestors did during the ancient feasting ceremonies.

Unlike the ancestors of old, these later spirits were unincorporated. They were released from the cycles of gift-giving and rituals of consummation necessary for continued lineage fertility. Indeed, sexual consummation while practiced by some later sects, was in others, like certain foods, taboo. Although group feasting rituals among clans and as part of annual public ceremonies continued, the emergence of more personal rituals reflected a markedly different society from that dominated by the Zhou focus on the past, one in which longevity cults and alchemical fetishes later associated with Daoism could flourish.

Notes

1. For a discussion of different scholarly perspectives on man's relation to Heaven, the role of sacrifice and the change to "self-divinization" during the Warring States period, see Puett (2002). Puett notes that seeing sacrifice as gifts sets up a *do ut des* system of benevolent reciprocity that does not accord with the evidence that sacrifice functioned to establish ancestors in a hierarchy to better control nature (which like all spirits, the ancestral ones included, could be malevolent). I do not see these ideas in opposition but rather as parts of a whole ritual system in which the risk of failure (or spiritual malevolence) cannot be discounted but it is also not the only factor that negates the cyclical nature of man's relation to his ancestors (in which sacrifice and fecundity might be termed "gifts").
2. The use of coins represents the alienation of the exchanged goods from a symbolic system.
3. This collapse began before the official end of the Western Zhou period in 771 BCE when people from the west took over the Zhou ceremonial center and the Zhou were forced to move eastward. See Li (2000). The collapse of Zhou authority continued through the Spring and Autumn period.
4. For the first hundred years of the Western Zhou period, the Zhou continued to worship the Shang ancestors. It was only by the mid-Western Zhou period, by around the ninth century BCE, that they asserted the primacy of their own founding ancestors, King Wen and King Wu.
5. On the role of mortuary rituals in affirming social identity, see the essays in Chesson (2001).
6. The term *ru* 儒 meant one who was pliant or weak, a possible reference to their interest in dance and singing rather than in the art of warfare promoted by the followers of Mozi 墨子. See Eno (1990); Cook (2003c).
7. See a.o. Chang (1983), Liu Yu (1989), Boileau (1998–99). We know from recently excavated bamboo texts preserved in Warring States tombs in the state of Chu that the transmitted versions of ritual texts, such as the *Zhouli* (a purposefully ambiguous name meaning either the "Comprehensive Rites" or the "Zhou Rites"), the *Liji* ("Ritual Records"), and the *Yili* ("Rites of Decorum") could not be the same as those circulating in the pre-Han period.
8. On the sacred nature of this centralized city and why it might be considered a *guo* 國 (walled city, kingdom, or state), see Ke Heli (2003).
9. Although, as Puett (2002), 97–101 points out, they purposely emphasized the role of these rituals in the human realm, pulling away from a focus on the powers of the dead.
10. The terms used for sacrificial vessels in the texts reflect vessel types used in the late Warring States and Han periods, which suggests that the food service might also reflect later preferences.
11. In the Han period, the *chen* was a technical term "meaning an arc equal to 1/12 of the celestial circle, each such arc conventionally denoted by the name of one of the twelve Earthly Branches"; on the other hand, it was the Dipper that pointed out the solar nodes. See Major (1993), 18–19, 88–94.
12. According to later ritual texts, the soul resided in the temple; this contradicts the earlier inscriptional evidence which depicts the ancestors on either side of *shangdi* looking down from Heaven. Painted "soul-guide" banners placed on top of the coffins in Han tombs from Mawangdui depict the deceased—transformed into half-snake bodies—rising to the stars.
13. The ancient graph for "Great" was written as almost identical to the ancient graph for "Heaven" (*tian* 天), and the two graphs are often interchanged in early Zhou records. Examples of the interchange are found in an alternative term for the site of worship, the Great Hall (*da shi* 大室) or Hall of Heaven.
14. For a late Western Zhou building complex possibly used for ritual purposes, see Falkenhausen (1999), 460–61, fig. 7.3. The difference between a *gong* and a *shi* 室 at that time is unclear. In later times, a *gong* was a larger building that could encompass *shi* "chambers." For a list of temple names, see Hwang (1996), 257–62.
15. There is increasing evidence, however, that other bronze-making cultures peripheral to the Zhou had highly advanced production systems as well. Unfortunately they did not leave inscribed records.

16. Another relative on her father's side gave her a pouring vessel. For these inscriptions and rubbings, see Ma Chengyuan (1986–88), vol. 4, 393–402.
17. On the question of whether mediation played a part in this exercise, see Cook (2003c) and Ke Heli (2003).
18. Warfare as exorcism against those who were not "heaven descended" (*tianxia* 天下, a term also translated as "All Under Heaven" or the civilized world) is discussed in Ke Heli (2003) and Cook (2003b, 2004a).
19. This same description could apply to ancient tombs with mounds of "five-colored" earth and planted trees, an area termed a *feng* 封 (the gift of a *feng* was the primary award for meritorious officials mentioned in post-Zhou texts).
20. *Yu* is identified variously as either *yujincao* 鬱金草 (*curcuma longa*), a turmeric-like substance drawn from the aromatic tubers of a plant indigenous to northwestern China, or the *yuli* 郁李 (*prunus Japonica*), a small, sour cherry-like fruit presently found in southeastern mountain valleys. Both substances were used in medicines for a number of ailments including intestinal worms. See Stuart (1911), 138–40, 355; Ren (1992), 63–65.
21. Among the many signs of excess ascribed in late Warring States texts to the immoral last king of Shang were his mounds of used grain mash (*zao qiu* 糟丘), next to pools of *jiu* (*jiu chi* 酒池), and a "meat orchard" (*rou pu* 肉圃) (tree limbs draped with meat for drying or cooking).
22. The Zeng Hou Yi 曾侯乙 tomb (discussed later) contained a number of filters and sieves made out of bronze and bamboo, including one in the shape of a triangular funnel on a high stand (placed next to the large lidded basin). This brewing equipment suggests a more complex process than that used in earlier times. Archaeologists suspect this funnel was for dripping medicine into alcohol.
23. While the area of Shang occupation in northern Henan is deforested and arid today, scholars—judging from animal remains and climate studies—believe that it was warmer and more moist in antiquity.
24. For a description of the performance from the ode "Chuci" 楚茨, see Kern (2000). For an exploration of earlier origins and Western Zhou bronze inscription eulogies, see Cook (2003c).
25. I am grateful to Childs-Johnson who explained to me the connection between the bronze, jade, and tomb guardian figure faces. For examples of the mask, see Lu (1988), vol. 1, 337; Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo (1994), 9.
26. Wu Hong (1985, 1992) suggests that the tomb functioned as home and paradise and was the final destination for the soul.
27. While the crane during the Western Zhou period may have been just another tasty meat, by the Warring States period, the crane was depicted as a symbol of transcendence. It is a well-known symbol of immortality and Daoist transcendence by the medieval period.
28. Water chestnuts, peppers, tea berries, cocklebur, apricots, and other medicinal items were found inside the coffins. The women in the tomb varied in age between 13 and 25 but the man was in his early forties.
29. See the description of the lord's bedroom in the "Zhao hun" 招魂 song used to summon the soul back from its wandering in the dangerous Four Regions; Hawkes (1985), 219–31.
30. These officials are often mentioned on early bronze inscriptions. Allan (1991, 74–111) suggests that the *ya* sign replicated the Four Regions cosmic pattern which was also replicated in the shape of the Shang tomb and in the shape of the tortoise plastron used in divination. It seems likely that these men were mortuary ritual officers.
31. Harper (1995). Divination and sacrifice records preserved in fourth-century BCE Chu tombs document the process of "releasing" the sick person's body from the grip of the possessing spirit's or demon's influence through magical means, inner and outer purification (*zhai*) ties, and the prestation of meat sacrifices—the same meats found in warlord Zeng's caldrons—and jade pieces. Clear symptoms of a body cursed or possessed by unhappy or inauspicious spirits included a person's inability to eat or the loss of other bodily functions. For a translation and discussion of some of these texts, see Cook (2004b).

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CHAPTER TWO

Food and Philosophy in Early China

Roel Sterckx

> When a person is born there are two things that do not need to be learned: the first is to breathe and the second is to eat. Except for these two, there is nothing that is not the result of learning and habit. What assists life is eating, what injures life is lust.
>
> ("Discussion of the Highest Way Under Heaven"; Harper 1998, 432).

Discussions of food, the exchange of food, commensality, and food sacrifice pervade the dialogues and treatises of philosophers, persuaders, and ritualists in late Zhou and early imperial China. Meticulous care was invested in the preparation and serving of food in sacrificial rituals and banquets. Ritual codes suggest that the presentation of food reflected a host's integrity toward the human or otherworldly guests that were to be feasted. Ritual itself, according to the *Liji* (Book of Rites), originated with eating and drinking (*Liji*, 21.586). Philosophers and moralists on their part adopted attitudes toward food as a yardstick to measure a person's character or moral aptitude. In early China, as in most past and present societies, culinary culture transcended the necessities of nourishing the body or pleasing the palate. Debates on fasting or feasting, on eating or feeding others—in this world or the hereafter—reveal a gamut of social, moral, and religious codes that made up the fiber of early Chinese society.

We start with an exemplary story featuring one of Confucius's disciples:

> While Zisi dwelt in poverty, a friend gave him a present of millet from which he accepted two cartloads. Yet when someone else presented him a jar of wine and ten pieces of dried meat he considered it unacceptable. That man said: "You accepted your friend's millet and declined my wine and meat. That is, you declined the lesser quantity and took the greater. This is entirely contrary to righteousness, and what you took to be your due indicates a failure to be satisfied. What

> was the basis for your action?" Zisi replied: "This is true, but I was unfortunate that my poverty reached the point that my property was nearly destroyed and I was afraid I might have to cut off the sacrifices to my forefathers. Accepting the millet meant alleviating the situation. Wine and preserved meat provide the means for feasting. With respect to my present lack of food, feasting would be contrary to righteousness. How could I have been thinking of the matter in terms of portions? My action was based on righteousness." The man put his wine and meat on his shoulders and left. (*Kong Congzi*, 9.53; Ariel 1996, 118)

In accepting plain millet instead of meat and wine Confucius's disciple takes the moral high ground: food, especially when received as a gift, ought not to solely serve the purpose of sustaining and feeding oneself. The intake of food is by definition a communal endeavor that includes both the living and the dead who deserve to receive a portion of the meal in sacrifice. For the duty bound Confucian, righteousness, it appears, is to prevail over the instinctive desire to fill the belly. Many similar episodes are preserved in early Chinese writings and they illustrate how the discourse on food was infused with comments on morality, ideals of human conduct and philosophical judgment. These cultural and philosophical appropriations of food and food culture in Warring States and Han China form the subject of this chapter.

Zhou and Han Cuisine

Imagery and metaphors associated with food and cooking in ritual and philosophical discourse are necessarily rooted in the actual cuisine of the time. An extensive account of Zhou and Han cuisine need not concern us here. Yet, for our purpose, a few aspects of the material history surrounding food culture deserve to be highlighted.[1]

The main staple food in late Zhou and Han China was grain. By the Warring States period a greater variety had emerged including wheat, barley, and rice. The main drink was known as *jiu* 酒 "ale," and usually translated as "wine," "liquor," or spirits in general. Production of ale was based on germinated grains mixed with steamed rice and water, which was then allowed to ferment into an alcoholic brew (Wang Hengyu 1993; Poo 1999, 132–34). Dough made out of wheat flower appeared in the late Warring States period. By the time of Han a generic term, *bing* 餅, appears to refer to various kinds of doughy products such as flat bread, buns, dumplings, baked cakes, and noodles.

The grain diet was complemented with vegetables and fruits. Beans, especially the soybean, provided the main vegetable supplement. In addition, the shoots, leaves, and stems of the mallow were eaten. Other popular vegetables included shepherd's purse, various kinds of *Brassica*, and radish. The most common fruits included the peach, plum, chestnut, apricot, persimmon, and jujube (Knechtges 2002, 229–31). According to a story in

the *Han Feizi*, Confucius dismissed peaches as the lowest among the six fruits in sacrifice, claiming that they were "not even good enough to get access to the ancestral temple" (*Han Feizi*, 12.689–690).

The prime dish was the stew or *geng* 羹, a soup consisting of meat, vegetables or cereals, or a mixture of these. The stew was known throughout Chinese antiquity where it also served as an important sacrificial offering. The *geng* could contain meats as varied as ox, sheep, deer, pig, wild duck, and pheasant meat. Sources also record the consumption of turtle or dog meat stew. Vegetable stews belonged to the poor man's diet. Often the vegetable stew symbolizes virtues such as frugality or modesty. Several texts hail sages and virtuous officials for their willingness to include vegetable broth or a stew without condiments among their diet.[2] Fish soups, turtles, and shellfish were popular in the southern states of Chu, Wu, and Yue (Wu Ruishu 2000). "Yue people," one literatus argued during a court debate in 81 BCE, "consider oysters to be a delicacy, yet treat the ox, pig, and sheep with disdain. . . . Therefore someone who is ignorant of flavors considers fragrant aromas to be foul, someone who is ignorant of the Dao believes that beautiful words spoil the ears" (*Yantie lun*, 9.556). Southerners also appreciated the taste of snake meat, and, according to one source, sweet-and-sour cuisine (*Huainanzi*, 7.242, 8.264).

The early Chinese had cultivated the use of ice, which was used for the entertainment of guests, to accompany the use of food, or in burial rituals and sacrifices (*Zuozhuan*, 1248–1250 [Zhao 4]). Ice was collected periodically from deep valleys and hills and stored in towns and villages. During these collections sacrificial rituals were performed. For instance in the year corresponding to 538 BCE, an ice-gathering expedition was accompanied by sacrifices to a deity known as the Overseer of the Cold (*si han* 司寒) who received offerings of a black bull and black millet. As the ice was being hauled out of the ice houses peach-wood arrows were fired to expel calamitous influences. The opening of the ice houses was accompanied with the sacrifice of a lamb to the same deity. By the third century BCE, lamb sacrifices to the spirit of the cold prior to opening up the icehouses were incorporated in calendars known as "monthly ordinances" (*yue ling* 月令) that regulated the seasonal and ritual activities of state and empire (e.g., *Lüshi chunqiu*, 2.64).

Boiling and stewing were the most commonly practiced methods for meat preparation. Fragments of a bamboo-slip manuscript cookbook excavated in 1999 from the tomb of Wu Yang 吳陽 (d. 162 BCE) at Huxishan 虎溪扇 (Yuanling 沅陵, Hunan province) include recipes for preparing boiled horse, boiled lamb, and boiled deer (Harper 2004). Another popular method was to bake whole animals wrapped in clay without removing feathers or fur (*Shuowen*, 10A.45a; *bao* 炮). The Han cook had also mastered the art of fermentation and sauces were made from soy, meats, fish, and shrimp (Hsu 1980, A11, D1, E7). Cooking procedures are also preserved in the ritual literature of the time. For instance a set of "eight delicacies" (*ba zhen* 八珍) to be served to the elderly is recorded in great detail in the *Liji*.

It includes instructions on how to fry, grill, and bake meats, make soup balls, cook liver and fat and includes ingredients as diverse as deer, dog liver, and wolf's breast (*Liji*, 28.755–59; *Zhouli*, 7.236, 9.318–22). The most generic reference to taste in Warring States and Han China was contained in the term "five flavors" (*wu wei* 五味), that is, pungent, bitter, sweet, sour, and salty. Philosophers regularly adopted the term to refer to the worldly delights associated with food in general.

At the courts, special officials were in charge of a ruler's diet. These officials were in charge of individual ingredients, specific cooking procedures, and catering on designated occasions. They included wine makers, spice officers, handlers of food baskets, salt stewards, and the like. The detailed attention to food provision stretched beyond the confines of the courts and dining halls of feudal lords, kings, or emperors. Officials on mission and armies posted in the outskirts of the empire also benefited from an organized catering and supply system. The organization required to supply troops on campaign was immense. For instance, Sima Qian 司馬遷 notes that, when the Han dispatched its troops to the far western region of Dayuan in 104 BC, "all men in the empire who belonged to the seven classes of reprobates were called out and sent to transport supplies of dried boiled rice to the general and his forces." Allegedly "the lines of transport wagons and marching men stretched uninterruptedly all the way west to Dunhuang" (*Shiji*, 123.3176). Meticulous administrative notes were kept listing the food supplies distributed among officials in localities far removed from the capital palaces of Han. For instance among a large cache of excavated bamboo slips and wooden plaques discovered (in 1990–92) near a postal station in the far Western region near Dunhuang was a "chicken inventory" dated to the twelfth month of the year 62 BCE. On this register, the local kitchen officer reports the amount of chickens that were distributed to officials who worked in or were passing through the locality (Zhang Defang and Hu Pingsheng 2001, 77–78).

At the court, food preparation was to be executed following a strict calendrical and ritual schedule using representative ingredients conforming to the seasons. According to the "monthly ordinances," the Son of Heaven was to eat millet and mutton in spring, beans and fowl in summer, sorghum and dog in autumn, and millet and pork in winter. For tempering ingredients, sour was to predominate in the spring, bitter in the summer, pungent in the autumn and salt in the winter.[3] Over and above their culinary value, such prescriptions were symbolical: by partaking of all ingredients in the world in a cyclical and timely fashion the ruler symbolically tasted the cosmos itself and ensured that the seasonal harmony dominating the universe would remain in balance.

Taboos and magico-religious beliefs accompanied the cook in the kitchen. For instance one taboo documented for the Han period held that a cook should avoid preparing soya or bean sauce while there was thunder as this would cause people to have a rolling stomach (*Lunheng*, 23.979; *Fengsu tongyi*, "Yi wen," 563). Another belief held that horse liver was deadly

poisonous unless it was ingested together with wine.[4] It is unlikely that such taboos were upheld universally, rather, they appear as part of a regional folklore and custom and varied across time. A third century BCE text for instance claims that the liver of a white mule has a strong healing power (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 8.459). Foods were also identified as vehicles by means of which demonic agents transmitted illness onto the consumer. Manuscripts recovered at Shuihudi (Yunmeng, Hubei, burial dated ca. 217 BCE) contain disease prognostications that identify pork, red meat, dog, several types of dried meat, fish, eggs, and liquor as transmitters of disease (Harper 2001, 110–12). The kitchen itself, more specifically the stove, home to the stove god, formed a locus of ritual activity (*Fengsu tongyi*, 8.360–361; Chard 1990). A third-century demonography includes the following recipe to purge the stove: "When without cause the stove cannot cook food—the Yang Demon has taken its vapor (*qi*). Burn pig feces inside the house. Then it will stop" (Harper 1996, 245, no. 12).

Certain food taboos were inspired by religious precept or dietary codes. These could be aimed at enhancing bodily hygiene, invigorating longevity, or in preparation for ritual and sacrificial activities. Leading officiants during ritual sacrifices in early China subjected themselves to periods of ritual purification involving fasting and ritual washing. Yet, with the exception of dietary rules prescribed during mourning (discussed below) no community or church sanctioned dietary codes similar to those emerging in medieval Daoism and Buddhism have been preserved for Zhou and Han China. It is clear however that such later dietary practices had precursors in earlier times. The abstention of cereals for instance, prescribed in Daoist religious communities in the early medieval period, is already discussed in a Han macrobiotic text on grain abstention recovered at Mawangdui (Harper 1998, 305–09).

Both in the context of sacrifice as well as in the medicinal tradition leeks occupied a central place as they were thought to be the oldest among all herbs and enhance the senses (Harper 1998, 407). Another taboo recorded was a five-day abstention from hot food during winter in honor of a legendary hero and paragon of loyalty Jie Zitui 介子推 (sixth century BCE). In the Han period a cult developed around him in the region of Taiyuan (Shansi), which evolved into the Cold Food Festival (*han shi* 寒食) during the medieval period (Holzman 1986).

Meat and Morals

Aristocrats and nobles in early China were frequently referred to as "meat eaters" (*rou shi zhe* 肉食者). The same term was used to denote officials who enjoyed high rank and salary (e.g. *Zuozhuan*, 182 [Zhuang 10], 1677 [Ai 13]; *Shuoyuan*, 11.271). The origins of this term do not reflect dietary reality (meat, after all, constituted a relatively minor share in the diet of the time) but ought to be traced back to the role of sacrificial meat in forging social

bonds in feudal China. Following a sacrifice, a king or overlord would distribute portions of the sacrificial meats among his feudal lords who, in turn, would present a share of the meats to their respective subjects and receive meats from their followers in turn (*Guoyu*, 11.402; *Zuozhuan*, 271 [Min 2], 326 [Xi 9], 427 [Xi 24], 1378 [Zhao 16]). Thus the *Zhouli* (Rites of Zhou) states: "By way of a sacrificial meat exchange, friendly relations are established between states belonging to the brothers of the sovereign" (*Zhouli*, 34.1363). Sacrificial meats were also distributed before military campaigns (Lewis 1990, 29–30). Such sacrificial meat exchanges thus served to reaffirm bonds of kin, reinforce loyalty and solidify political relationships that were based on the acceptance of meat. For instance, when Confucius parted services with the state of Lu, "he took part in a sacrifice, but afterwards, was not given a share of the meat of the sacrificial animal. He left the state without waiting to take off his ceremonial cap. Those who did not understand him thought he acted in this way because of the meat, but those who understood him realized that he left because Lu failed to observe the proper rites" (*Mencius*, 6B.6). Such was the symbolical value of sacrificial meat that it was the only gift from friends Confucius allegedly would receive with a bow (*Analects*, 10.23).

In daily life meat was a privilege for the rich and powerful who could complement their livestock income with meats obtained from hunting. The archaeological record suggests that in aristocratic circles a wide variety of hunted animals were prepared for consumption, including wild rabbits and sika deer, pheasants, cranes, turtledoves, wild geese, partridges, magpies, and ringed pheasants (Sterckx 2002, 28–29). Among the more extravagant meats—often mentioned to dismiss the overindulgence of the rich and famous—were leopard foetus, yak tail, and bear paws (*Zuozhuan*, 515 [Wen 1], 655 [Xuan 2]; *Guoyu*, 18.575; *Han Feizi*, 7.400, 7.438; *Shuoyuan*, 8.190, 10.264). Commoners were most likely deprived of the luxuries of meat, except the occasional chicken or fowl perhaps during special occasions or when there were guests to be entertained.

The requisite of filial piety required that meat, together with wine, was to be reserved for the elderly when possible. The *Guanzi* prescribes that a ruler ought to donate meat and wine on a monthly basis to people over eighty and daily to nonagenarians (*Guanzi*, 18.446). According to Mencius, ensuring that people over seventy can eat meat is part of good government (1A.3, 1A.7, 7A.22). The *Liji* spells out this compassion for the elderly in great detail:

> Those who were fifty were given especially fine grain. For those of sixty meat was kept in store. Those of seventy enjoyed an extra portion of savory meat and octogenarians were supplied regularly with delicacies. For those of ninety food and drink was not to leave their chambers and it was deemed permissible that savory meats and drink should follow them wherever they went. (*Liji*, 28.754)

While it is highly doubtful that such charitable schemes were put into actual practice, they do at least reflect social expectations. In Han times

charitable food distributions were incorporated in state ritual. One such ritual was known as "Entertaining the Aged" (*yang lao* 養老) when, during the tenth month in winter, senior citizens were treated to a banquet in the capital or a wine-drinking ceremony in their district (Bodde 1975, 361–72). The elderly were also treated ceremoniously to porridge in an annual spring ceremony to reinforce their longevity (Bodde 1975, 344–49). During such ritual banquets, the Han emperor would personally bare his arms, cut up the meats, and serve condiments to demonstrate his respect toward the elderly (*Hanshu*, 51.2330).

Being a symbol of abundance, deliberate abstention of meat at designated occasions was meant to reflect ritual correctness and moral integrity. Meat consumption was to be minimized during periods of ritual purification, fasts and, most importantly, during the traditional mourning period which could last twenty-seven months up to three years. A mourner's diet was strictly regulated: "At the end of the heaviest mourning period (after nine months), one may eat vegetables and fruits, and drink water and broth, using no salt or cream. When unable to eat dry cereals, one may use salt and cream with them" (*Liji*, 41.1101). When a minister or a grandee was buried, a ruler was expected not to eat meat nor listen to music after the prescribed session of wailing (*Liji*, 42.1111). Fasts during mourning included a three-day period of total abstention gradually alleviated by the intake of gruel, following which the mourner reverted to solid foods. The chief mourner would live on coarse rice and water; fruits and vegetables were only to be eaten a year into the mourning period, whereas meat had to wait another year (*Liji*, 43.1155–56). Thus the mourners progressively returned to a full diet, via a vegetarian stage, as they gradually distanced themselves from the deceased to reenter the realm of worldly flavor and sensory satisfaction.

We should note that the information presented above is preserved in ritual codices that are highly normative. It is therefore unlikely that dietary restrictions were upheld in their entirety and on every occasion. In fact the same ritual codes allow for exceptions in the rules governing periodical fasts for those who are ill or old aged (*Liji*, 43.1158). To remedy exhaustion and illness during periods of fasting, an eponymous Confucius gives instructions on bodily hygiene: "If a man has ulcers on his body, he should bathe. If he has a wound on his head, he should wash it. If he is ill, he should drink wine and eat meat. To emaciate one's body so as to be ill is something a gentleman does not do" (*Liji*, 41.1101). The text continues by stating that dying from emaciation constitutes a failure of a son's filial duties. Indeed the impact of the mourning period on the mental and physical health of immediate relatives was recognized. A son's grief over the loss of his father would affect his health to such a degree that

> In the bitterness of his grief, and the distress and pain of his thoughts, his kidneys were injured, his liver dried up, and his lungs scorched, while water or broth did not enter his mouth. For three days the cooking fire was not kindled. And therefore neighbors would prepare

> gruel and rice-water to feed him. Thus when there was internal sorrow and grief, this would produce a change in his outward appearance. As severe hurt and pain would take hold of his heart, his mouth could not relish any sweet flavors, nor did his body find ease in anything comfortable. (*Liji*, 54.1349–1350)

The text continues by stipulating the process of reentry into the world of normal flavors once the official mourning period is over: in the initial stage the mourner takes coarse rice and water, next vegetables and fruits are eaten again, then pickles and sauces reappear on the menu and finally sweet wine, wine, and dried meat is consumed again (*Liji*, 55.1366). The mourner gradually rejoins the sensory world of the living: from a world devoid of flavor, passing through the consumption of water, hash, sauce, dried meat, and, finally, to the reinvigorating delights of fresh meat and wine.

Cooking and Governing the World

Culinary culture in early China served as a widespread metaphor in political and philosophical discourse. The preparation and consumption of food furnished a recurrent craft analogy for adept government or moral action. Laozi compares the ruling of a large state with the delicate skill required to cook a small fish (*Daodejing*, ch. 60). Chapter three in this volume discusses how Zhuangzi presents the famous butcher Ding 丁 to exemplify the sage's spontaneous knack and predilection for efficient but minimal action (*wu wei* 無爲) (*Zhuangzi*, 3.117–19). Similar imagery is taken up in other philosophical texts. The *Huainanzi* for example notes: "Thus the sage adjudicates and regulates all things like a carpenter cuts, chops and pierces a wooden handle or a cook cuts, scrapes and divides the pieces. Carefully he obtains what is appropriate without breaking or harming things" (*Huainanzi*, 11.358). In the *Han Feizi*, ministers are compared to cooks "blending the five flavors" to serve to their lord (*Han Feizi*, 15.825). The ability to cut meat in proportionate measures could symbolize an individual's sense of impartiality or forebode concomitant success in an official career. A good example of a butcher-turned-minister is that of Chen Ping 陳平, one of Han Emperor Gaozu's cronies who rose from poverty to high office:

> Before Chen Ping became an official he cut meat in a village, and he divided the pieces so equally that his qualifications for the post of prime minister became apparent. Indeed the cutting of meat and the cutting of words are one and the same thing. (*Lunheng*, 27.1122)

In the Analects, as we will see later, Confucius's attitude toward food and dining repeatedly serves to illustrate his sense for propriety, and Mencius, admitting that nothing tastes more delicious than bear paws, parades the palate of Yi Ya 易牙 to argue that, like taste, the human heart–mind universally

esteems reason and righteousness (6A.7). In another passage (7A.27) Mencius draws an analogy between the palate and the heart-mind: "The palate is not the only thing which is open to interference by hunger and thirst. The human heart too, is open to the same interference (Lau 1970, 188)." In short, food analogies can be found in virtually every philosophical and political text produced in Warring States and Han China where they provide *topoi* for the analysis of sagehood and human government, or the exploration of the human senses.

Craft analogies that present cooking and the appropriate attitude toward food as a symbol for apt government and human sagehood, were the product of historical circumstance. In Zhou and Han society, officials linked to the ruler's secular and sacrificial kitchen wielded significant political power. Indeed catering for the ruler's palate was a craft invested with political authority, a task deemed so pivotal that it extended even to the afterlife. Artifacts unearthed from tombs suggest that entire cooking facilities were replicated for the use of the dead in the afterlife. The most famous example was exhumed from tomb no. 1 at Mawangdui (Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 1991). The register of grave goods recovered from tomb no. 2 at Baoshan (Jingmen, Hubei; burial dated ca. 316 BCE) refers to the compartment east of the burial chamber containing the coffin as the "food chamber" (*shi [si] shi* 食[飤]室) (*Baoshan Chu jian*, 37 slips 251/255). A Han king of the southern Chu region, buried at Shizishan in Xuzhou, was interred together with his cook to perpetuate his favorite cuisine during banquets in the afterlife (Rawson 1999, 10). Clearly, officiants charged with feeding their master and the preparation of sacrificial foods for the spirits belonged to the core entourage of the feudal lord, king, or nobleman. One official, the "royal steward" or "chief cook" (*shanfu* 膳夫), was regularly put on a par with the office of the chief minister. In Zhou bronze inscriptions, the steward is said to transmit his king's orders and several poems in the *Shijing* (Book of Odes) rank the steward together with officials of high rank such as generals, superintendents, and senior advisors. In the model bureaucracy preserved in the *Zhouli* the royal steward ranks sixth among the officers of Heaven and in early imperial times the steward was not infrequently associated with the office of the *zaixiang* 宰相 "grand councilor," which literally translates "steward and minister" (Shen Xian 2001, 72–79; Sterckx 2003).

Chief ministers sometimes acted symbolically as chief cooks during feasts and banquets and, vice versa, cooks or stewards performed roles as ritual specialists. Yet texts dealing with ritual sacrifice equally insist that, ideally, the roles of cook and ritual officiant were to be kept apart during the performance of ancestral sacrifices. Even an iconoclastic Zhuangzi makes reference to this in an admonition that humans ought to be content performing their natural duties rather than striving to extend their ambitions beyond these: "Even if a cook were not attending to his kitchen, the impersonator of the dead would never leap over the pots and pans to take his place" (*Zhuangzi*, 1.24). The *Huainanzi* likewise emphasizes a strict hierarchy of tasks in the

successive procedures of an ancestral sacrifice:

> Today in sacrifices the one who slaughters, cuts, boils and kills, splits dogs and roasts pigs and harmonizes the five flavors is the cook. The one who lays out the square and round sacrificial vases, sets out the wine jars and sacrificial stands and sets up the baskets and cups, is the priest. The one who fasts and purifies himself, dons himself in full outfit, keeps a profound silence and does not speak, and acts as the one on whom spirits rely, is the representative of the dead. Even when a cook or priest would be incapacitated, the representative of the dead would never replace them in arranging the wine pots and sacrificial stands. (*Huainanzi*, 20.678; see also 17.585)

The political status associated with feeding the king, or later the emperor, was further reflected in the idea that food officers, through catering for the ruler's body, also guarded his moral consciousness, and ultimately, his power to govern. The latter is exemplified in a Han chapter entitled "The Grand Mentor" ("Bao fu" 保傅) that describes how the steward is put in charge of the moral education of a young prince. Whenever the young prince misbehaves, the text states, his meats (*shan* 膳) ought to be removed so as to instill a sense of "goodness" (*shan* 善) in him (*Da Dai Liji*, 3.52). The influence of one's diet on a born or unborn person's moral behavior appears to have been widely accepted. The same text insists that, during the final months of pregnancy, a queen bearing the future heir to the throne should be prevented from craving and eating irregular flavors (*fei zheng wei* 非正味), that is, products that are out of season or foodstuffs presented in an irregular order (*Da Dai Liji*, 3.60). A rumor surrounding Mencius's mother's prenatal care held that she "taught him in the womb" by only sitting on a straight mat and not eating meat that was not cut properly during pregnancy (*Han Shi waizhuan*, 19.306). In short, the act of nourishing the body of a prince, a future ruler or king involved more than a concern with nutrition since food was thought to contribute to the moral substrate of a person: nourishing the body of a ruler was an act of moral catering. Only if the ruler's senses were exposed to the proper impulses induced by food would he be able to exert the moral power to govern. Mencius (7A.36) extends the same idea to the environmental transformation of human character: "A man's surroundings transform his air just as the food he eats changes his body" (Lau 1970, 109).

A ruler's dining schedule was organized according to ritual precepts meant to ensure the proper passage of time and hierarchy. According to a Han text, a king was expected to take four meals a day symbolizing that he had the products of the four quarters and four seasons at his disposal. The ingestion of food thus became part of the ritual maintenance of the cosmos at large: "In tranquillity, the king occupies the centre and controls the four quarters. At dawn he takes a meal: it is the inception of the lesser *yang*. At noon he takes his meal: it is the inception of the greater *yang*. In the

afternoon he takes his meal: it is the inception of the lesser *yin*. In the evening he takes his meal: it is the inception of the greater *yin*." (*Bohutong*, 3.118). While feeding the king the royal steward invited the performance of music to "stimulate the act of eating" (*yi yue you shi* 以樂侑食)(*Zhouli*, 7.244; *Da Dai Liji*, 3.54 ff.) As had been the case ever since the sage kings of antiquity took their meals, each meal was to be accompanied with the proper music and decorum: "Yao, Shun, Tang, Wen and Wu all ruled with an easy mind and faced south. At this time, at the sound of the bells they would begin eating, at the sound of the *yong* music they would clear the food from the table, and after eating the rice they would sacrifice to the stove" (*Huainanzi*, 9.311). The performance of music during meals, according to one source, symbolized the idea that the ruler was duly enjoying peace and abundance in his realm. Accordingly a virtuous ruler was not to take food when he had not accomplished his tasks, nor would he eat to repletion when his spiritual power had not manifested itself to the full (*Bohutong*, 3.118).

Let us now turn to the process of cooking itself. Descriptions of the act of cooking shed light on the way in which the sage or ruler-king was to savor, and hence govern, the world. Given the prominent role of food officers in the political spectrum it is no great surprise that cooking, or the art of "harmonizing flavors" (*he wei* 和味), was regularly linked to ministerial talent in early China. As we pointed out above, catering for the taste of the ruler was in essence a moral act as it maintained the body and mind of the fountainhead of political power. Furthermore the correct understanding of flavor was also thought to stimulate sagehood which resulted from a balanced psychosomatic nourishment. The cook therefore did to ingredients what a ruler did to his populace; namely, neutralizing individual flavors for the benefit of a harmonious mixture, manipulating and guiding individual ingredients to make up society.

A classic passage equating the art of cooking with government occurs in the *Zuozhuan*, where Yanzi 晏子, the sage counselor of Qi, compares the relationship between ruler and vassal with the mixing and seasoning of a stew:

> When Duke Jing of Qi returned from the hunt, Yanzi was attending him at the Chuan Terrace when a certain Zi You (style of Liangqiu Ju) rushed up to join them. The Duke announced: "It is only you, Ju, who is in harmony with me." To which Yanzi replied: "Ju is merely agreeing with you, how can he be considered to be in harmony with you?" The Duke asked: "Is there a difference between harmony and agreement/assent?" Yanzi replied: "There is. Harmony (*he* 和) may be compared to a stew. You have water, fire, vinegar, mince meat, salt and plums, with which to cook the fish and the meat. It is brought to the boil by means of firewood. Next the cook blends (*he*) the ingredients, equalizing the stew by means of seasonings, adding whatever is deficient and carrying off whatever is in excess. Then his Lord eats it and thus brings his heart at ease. (*Zuozhuan*, 1419–20 [Zhao 20])

To placate the temper and emotions of the ruler, Yanzi advises that he should be nourished with a harmonious mixture of ingredients. Cooking here points beyond the sensory experience to an idealized image of interpersonal or interstate relationships (Schaberg 2001, 230–32). A sense of moral and psychological balance is inferred from a well-tempered and balanced diet. Following an explanation applying the concept of harmony to the relationship between ruler and minister (a vassal's disagreement with his ruler serves to produce a better policy "blend"), the text quotes four lines from a Shang hymn in the Book of Odes ("Lie zu" 烈祖, Mao 302) in which well tempered and perfectly balanced soups are presented as the most efficacious ancestral offerings:

The stew is well seasoned (harmonious)
We are careful and composed.
Silently we preside at the sacrifice
And during this time all quarrels are set aside.

The well-balanced sacrificial stew here reflects a degree of harmony among those who offer it up. The idea that a harmonious stew in the cauldron symbolized political concord and harmony with the spirit world can also be seen in a definition of sacrifice as an activity in which one "declares a state of harmony" (*gao he* 告和) to the ancestors or former kings. Such announcement of harmony is explained in various ways as the harmony of the four seasons, a harmony between the ruler and his people, between Heaven and Earth, between far and distant, high and low, or between *yin* and *yang* (*Yi Zhoushu*, 5.482; *Guoyu*, 3.130). It is not surprising that this ode is quoted frequently to illustrate the idea of harmonizing diverse elements into one. For instance the *Zhongyong* 中庸 quotes the final two lines in the stanza to describe a gentleman as someone who receives respect without "lifting a hand" and whom people trust without him having spoken a word (Ames 2001, 114).

The *Zuozhuan* narrative continues by stating that flavor and sound have a common origin: "The former kings adjusted the five flavors and harmonized the five sounds to calm their hearts and perfect their government. . . ." Next follows an enumeration of the various components for music. The point made is that harmony, either in the guise of flavor or sound, consists of blending complementary opposites. Likewise unopposed agreement or assent with one's superior is portrayed as an inferior form of communal relationship since it entails bowing to whatever option is being presented. "If you were to use water to flavor water, who would be able to drink it?"

The same text also contains snippets of a physiological theory that links the manipulation of flavors with political command. Thus the cook of the Duke of Jin notes that "flavor serves to enhance the circulation of *qi*. *Qi* serves to give fullness to the mind, the mind is used to fix words and words are used to issue commands" (*Zuozhuan*, 1311–12 [Zhao 9]). Political commands are induced by the intake of flavor through the medium of *qi*.

Likewise an official in charge of music is responsible for his lord's hearing by ensuring that his ruler's faculties are "perceptive" (*cong* 聰). The image here is that of ministers catering for the ruler's senses by acting as extended organs (*guan* 官) to his body. Such imagery of a "body simile," that is, the perception of the ruler–subject relationship as being interdependent like head and limbs or bodily organs, was well established by late Warring States times (e.g., *Lüshi chunqiu*, 17.1029, 20.1373).

Shouldering a Cauldron and a Chopping Block

The most original narrative linking the ruler's palate with political authority is embodied in passages describing the career of Yi Yin 伊尹, the semi-legendary minister of Xia, who was employed by the founding father of the Shang after he demonstrated his talent for government through his cooking skills. While neither oracle bone inscriptions nor the rare fragments of writings dateable to the late Shang or early Western Zhou mention Yi Yin in connection with cooking or the shouldering of vessels and a chopping block, Warring States and Han writers in search of craft analogies to illustrate governmental skill insist that Yi Yin succeeded in obtaining office by pleasing king Tang's 湯 palate (Sterckx, forthcoming). One must assume that the legend of Yi Yin's ascent to power as cook-turned-minister was well-known by Warring States times when it already provoked vociferous criticism by Mencius. Yi Yin's services, Mencius argues, had not been engaged because of his cooking skills but rather because he "delighted in the way of Yao and Shun" and wished to benefit the people (*Mencius*, 5A7). Such comments are not surprising since most Confucian writings argue at length that virtue should take precedence over the desires of the palate, ears, eyes, and body.

The earliest references stating that Yi Yin "carried the tripods and sacrificial stands" to join the Shang royal entourage occur in texts compiled during the third century BCE. In the *Han Feizi* the narrative is used to argue against the use of argumentation and verbal skill and in favor of indirect persuasion: Yi Yin, failing to obtain an audience after seventy requests, succeeds to convince king Tang without words or theories but, instead, by his skills as a cook (*Han Feizi*, 1.49, 4.222).[5] This identification of Yi Yin as a minister-cook espousing political craftsmanship through pleasing the senses of his ruler combines an amalgam of themes that came to exemplify political authority in Warring States and Han China. First there is the analogy that equates social harmony to the blending of flavors; second, we note the association of political legitimacy with the transfer or exchange of bronze tripods or ritual vessels. These elements are further reinforced by the idea that people of humble origin such as cooks, menials, and peasants (*pace* the founders of Han), can rise up to positions of political power through sheer skill and astuteness. By casting Yi Yin's shouldering of a cauldron as a prelude to crafty statesmanship, the narrative also links political legitimacy to a ruler's talent to recognize flavors and his knack to harmonize these in a

tripod in the same way as he unites his people under the aegis of moral harmony.

The image of Yi Yin as archetypal cook-advisor is elaborated in great detail in a chapter entitled "Fundamental Tastes" ("Ben wei" 本味) preserved in the *Lüshi chunqiu*. This text is revealing not only for its rhapsodic lists of culinary ingredients, but, more importantly, for its portrayal of the act of cooking itself and its program of "self-cultivation through tasting the world." In the text Yi Yin divulges how "perfect flavors" (*zhi wei* 至味) can be obtained through harmonizing individual flavors, a process that in turn requires political self-cultivation. "Ultimate flavor," it is argued, can only be obtained when a sage ruler possesses the necessary material conditions to please his palate, namely, a territory of cosmic proportions vast enough to provide the king with all ingredients under Heaven. (In political terms this implies that a king ought to draw on as wide a pool of human talent as possible.) Water is presented as the root of all flavor:

> You must ensure that, while [odors] are overcome you do not lose the inherent principles of the flavors. In the task of harmonizing and blending one must use the sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and salty. The balancing of what should be added first or last, in higher or lower quantities is very delicate as each (flavor) has its own effect. *The transformations within the cauldron are quintessential, marvelous, refined and delicate.* The mouth cannot express this in words, the mind cannot illustrate it by analogy. (tr. Harper 1984, modified)

The analogies inferred here are clear: rulers, like cooks, ought to strive for balance, guard what is essential and take heed not to neglect the inner qualities of things at the expense of overindulging in outwardly apparent pleasures. The ultimate ingredient that flavors the Dao is water, tasteless, yet containing a potency to modify all other flavors into a harmonious blend. The ultimate flavor, to paraphrase *Laozi* 63, is flavorless. Cooking here takes the form of a quasi-shamanic quest for quintessential substances, an act of physical self-cultivation. Yi Yin insists that the enlightened ruler should cultivate himself, stick to essentials, and grasp the Dao, as a result of which exotic tastes would reach his real and spiritual palate spontaneously. To sense the world thus implies setting out the physical conditions that enable sensation. The power to appreciate flavor does not issue from the intrinsic characteristic of individual elements, rather, it issues from the art of combination. The gathering of ingredients and its subsequent transformation into quintessential flavor constitutes a form of cosmic communication with the Dao and the universe at large. Most importantly, "perfect flavors" are distinguished from ordinary flavors: "perfect flavors" are characterized by their blandness, insipidness, and lack of individuated flavor. The sage-king does not sense the world in its particularities, rather he is able to function as a sensory organ devoid of individuality. As Zhuangzi puts it: "The relationships of the gentleman are as insipid as water, those of the petty man as

sweet as sweet wine. Yet the flavorless of the gentleman enables him to have close relationships whereas the sweetness of the petty man leads to disaffection" (*Zhuangzi*, 20.685).

Yi Yin's description of cooking utilizes a language similar to that found in physical cultivation literature. The cook is "transforming" ingredients into a "quintessential, miraculous, subtle and delicate" substance. The cauldron provides an analogy for the body: just as the cauldron provides the receptacle in which flavors can be mixed into a harmonious stew, so the body serves as a vessel in which nutritional provisions are transformed into vital energy. A text among the Mawangdui corpus entitled "Ten Questions" ("Shi wen" 十問) makes the parallel: first the body is prepared, next "firm, sturdy and undying; drink and food enter the body as guests. This is called the 'double marvelous recipe to penetrate spirit illumination.' " The whole technique is described as "The way of the Heavenly Teacher to eat spirit vapor" (Harper 1998, 387–88). Thus while the sacrificial cauldron offers an external way to communicate with the spirits, the body does the same in an internal way. Yet both cauldron and body are merely potential foundries of refined flavors or energy. Both require a skilled cook or a sage-ruler's "heart-mind" to be able to channel the ingredients into a superior blend. The ultimate combination of flavors, then, is said to be beyond the realm of words, beyond the comprehension of the mind, beyond analogy. The perfect sensation is sense-less in that it no longer can be analyzed into its components. The cook attempts to attain the ultimate essence of flavor through a progressive sequence of "transformations" aimed at de-flavoring this-worldly taste. Yi Yin's vessel or cauldron therefore does to flavors what the body does to sensory impressions. Yet the perspicacity of the sage is ultimately anchored in his capability to sense what is quintessential amid the endless gamut of sensory impulses the world lays out before him: "One who makes much of flavors is shallow in virtue" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 20.1374). The sage is able to process through his sensory organs what to others remains sensation-less; he tastes what is tasteless.

The portrayal of cooking as a quasi-shamanic quest for quintessential energy is further reinforced as the "Fundamental tastes" chapter continues. There Yi Yin engages into a Homeric enumeration of every possible exotic ingredient in the universe reminiscent of the "summons" (*zhao* 招) poems in the *Chuci* 楚辭, where the souls are tempted with delicious foods. Yi Yin's discourse ultimately is about statecraft. The art of cooking comes to symbolize the multiple transformations of the Dao, which ultimately revert to the One. To quote *Huainanzi*: "At present when we cut up an ox and boil its meat, some will have it with a vinaigrette sauce, others will take it with a sweet sauce. We can deep-fry it, roast it, grill it or smoke it to differentiate the taste with a myriad of recipes. Yet its origins are the carcass of one single ox" (*Huainanzi*, 11.362–63).

The "blending of flavors" was only one, albeit central, image among a variety of culinary images used to describe competent government or virtuous human conduct. Philosophers and rhetoricians made use of food

metaphors whenever such imagery served the purpose of their arguments. For instance, commenting on an incompetent ruler's need to moderate his severity, the *Lüshi chunqiu* states: "This situation is analogous to using salt to enhance flavor. Generally speaking when you use salt, you add it to some other thing. If the amount you use is not suitable, you ruin the other thing and the result is inedible. It is the same with severity. You can only use it when there are other things to which you add it" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 19.1271; tr. Riegel 2002, 492). Or, to discredit the validity of sophist arguments another chapter in the same text argues:

> When you use a tripod from (the town of) Shiqiu to cook a chicken, if you stew the chicken too long it will be flavorless and inedible, and if you simmer the chicken too short a time, it will be cooked but not well done. This is so, and yet when one looks at the vessel, it appears skillfully and finely made—even if useless. Master Hui Shi's doctrines bear a resemblance to this tripod. (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 18.1210; tr. Riegel 2000, 465)

Given the central role of the minister-cook, the political status of the meat sacrifice, and the importance of banquets as a venue of political activity, it is no surprise that political deception, from its origins, was associated with culinary perversion. This is best exemplified in narratives on the figure of Yi Ya, whom we encountered earlier in Mencius' famous bear paw analogy. Most sources place Yi Ya in the service of Duke Huan of Qi (685–643 BCE). Xunzi praises him as the paragon of good taste by stating that "Yi Ya's harmonious blend" transcended all individual tastes (*Xunzi*, 27.518). Another story held that Yi Ya was capable of distinguishing the waters of two joining rivers by tasting it (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 18.1168; *Huainanzi*, 12.379). Yet Yi Ya's skills and his desire to please his superior were also the source for a culinary perversion that led to his master unknowingly eating human flesh. Once, when called upon by his master, Yi Ya was so determined to gain his confidence that he fed him broth made of his firstborn son (*Han Feizi*, 2.112; *Guanzi*, 32.274; *Huainanzi*, 7.242, 9.300; *Shiji*, 32.1492).

Confucius Eats

Perhaps more than in the case of any other figure in ancient China, references to the real or eponymous Confucius illustrate that attitudes toward the secular and ritual consumption of food and drink served to exemplify human morality. According to the Master a gentleman does not crave a full stomach (*Analects*, 1.4, 17.22). Confucius could find pleasure in coarse food and plain water (7.16), would not eat to the full in the presence of someone in mourning (7.8, 17.21) and, on repeated occasions, lauds the sages of antiquity and virtuous individuals for having adopted a coarse diet (4.9, 6.11, 8.21). Confucius would never fail to alter his diet during periods of fasting (10.7), would not keep or eat sacrificial meats two or three days

after a sacrifice (10.9), and would always make an offering even if he only had the most simple of meals (10.11). The Master also never failed to demonstrate propriety in receiving food and tasting it: "When his lord made a gift of raw meat, he [Confucius] would invariably cook it and offer some of it up to his ancestors. When his lord made a gift of livestock, he would rear it. In attendance of his lord during dinner and when his lord was offering sacrifice, he would begin from the rice." (10.18). During periods of intensive sacrificial activity such as funerary rituals, he would avoid being overcome by drink (9.16), and when attending a sumptuous feast he would invariably take on a formal appearance and rise to his feet (10.25).

In addition to praising the Master's sense for propriety and occasion when dealing with food, the *Lunyu* (Analects) also presents Confucius as someone with a sensitive palate, insisting on the nutritional value of his diet, the hygiene and care with which food was served, and the correct proportioning of sauces or condiments. Yet underneath Confucius's outward appearance as a distinguished gourmet, it appears that his sense for the worldly presentation and consumption of food are motivated by a desire for balance: cooking, serving, and partaking of a meal in essence represent the art of combination and proportioning.

> He did not object to having his cereals finely cleaned, nor to having his minced meat cut up fine. He did not eat cereal that had been injured by heat or damp and turned sour, nor fish or flesh that was gone. He did not eat what was off in color or smelled strange, nor anything that was not properly cooked or out of season. He did not eat meat that was not cut properly, nor what was served without its proper sauce. Even when there was meat in abundance he would not eat it in disproportionate amount over staple foods. Only in his wine he knew no measure although he never got drunk (disorderly). He did not partake of wine and dried meat bought in the market. When he had eaten his fill, he would not eat more, even if the ginger had not yet been cleared. (*Analects*, 10.8)

Abundant indirect testimony of Confucius's attitude toward food occurs in sources that emerged over the centuries following the compilation of the Analects. A famous episode in his purported biography was the moment when he was enduring hardship in the area between Chen and Cai and forced to eat a vegetable broth without rice for seven days, which, according to one version of the story, forced him to lie down during daylight. When one of his disciples, Yan Hui, finally obtained some rice and cooked it for the master, Confucius saw his disciple reaching for some charcoal dusted rice in the pot, which he ate. Despite the rice being spoiled by ash, Confucius still insisted he offer some of it to his former lord (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 17.1066). Other narratives in which Confucius is faced with the moral choice of accepting or presenting food offerings are preserved in apocryphal

tales. The *Kongzi jiayu* contains the following story:

> In Lu there was a parsimonious man, who once cooked food in an earthen boiler. Having eaten from it he found it good, and filling an earthen dish with it, he brought it to Confucius. Confucius accepted it and was joyously pleased as if he had received a food-present from a grand set of sacrificial victims. Zi Lu said: "An earthen platter is a rustic vessel, and the cooked food is poor nourishment. Master, why then are you so glad with it?" The Master said: "Now he who loves to rebuke thinks of his ruler, and he who eats good food remembers his parents. I am so glad not because I consider the ingredients and implements lavish, but because, when he considers his food lavish, it is me he thinks of." (*Kongzi jiayu*, 2.1b; Kramers 1950, 231)

In a story in the same chapter Confucius is presented with a rotten fish from a fisherman, which he accepts with reverence intending to perform a sacrifice with it. When one of his disciples objected to the idea of the Master performing a sacrifice with a fish thrown away by a fisherman, he replied: "I have heard that one who, thinking it a pity that the food would otherwise be rotten and superfluous, wishes thus to apply himself to giving it away, is the counterpart of a good man. How could there be one who, on receiving a food-present from a good man, would not perform a sacrifice with it?" (*Kongzi jiayu*, 2.1b; Kramers 1950, 231–32; *Shuoyuan*, 5.107).

Confucius is also said to exploit the ritual causeries that surround a dinner or banquet in order to make clear his judgments about others. When dining as guest of the Ji clan, he did not decline any of the dishes, but refused to eat meat and finished his meal with the rice and liquid (*Liji*, 30.826). By refusing to eat meat, Confucius expressed his dissatisfaction with the ritual propriety shown by the Ji clan. On another occasion Confucius praises the deference of his host by eating to the full:

> When I dined as guest of the Shaoshi clan I ate to the full since they fed me with ritual propriety. When I was about to offer some food in sacrifice, my host got up and said, "My food is only coarse and insufficient to be offered in sacrifice." When I was about to take the concluding portions, he got up saying, "My provisions are only poor and I would not dare to injure you with them." (*Liji*, 42.1125; *Fengsu tongyi*, 3.135)

A passage in the *Lüshi chunqiu* suggests that the Master could also be persistent in his gastronomic dislikes: "King Wen enjoyed pickled calamus. When Confucius learned this, he wrinkled his nose and tried them. It took him three years to be able to endure them" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 14.816; tr. Riegel 2000, 329).

In sum, despite the diverse attitudes adopted by the historical or eponymous Confucius in these sources, the underlying message behind these narratives

is clear: attitudes toward food are a reflection on the Confucian gentleman's sense for hierarchy, ritual propriety, altruism and above all, his moral integrity. While falling short of advocating persistent fasting or starvation to achieve moral or spiritual goals, in taking or exchanging food, a respect for the social context and role of the parties involved is made to prevail over the physical imperative to feed the body. In the Confucian perspective nourishing the body was seen as a form of moral nourishment.

Mencius (3B.10) likewise presents the acceptance of food as a question of morality in his account of Chen Zhongzi, who allegedly spat out the goose stew his mother had given him because he thought it was ill-gotten. He ate what his wife cooked for him but refused to accept food from his mother (*Fengsu tongyi*, 3.153; *Lunheng*, 10.463–67). Mencius frequently points out that the overindulgence in food or fully stocked granaries at the court during periods of hardship should be taken as a sign of moral decay or an incompetence to govern (1A.3, 1A.4, 1B.12, 3B.9). Likewise he condemns the neglect of sacrificial duties and the use of sacrificial victims as food (3B.5).

Whereas in the stories above food hygiene may have been no more than the subject of the mood swings of fretful philosophers, for cooks and kitchen staff cooking hygiene could be a matter of life and death. The legalist thinker *Han Feizi* reports a case in which a cook is reprimanded for leaving a slice of raw liver in his master's soup. In another case a member of the kitchen staff is executed when a hair is found entangled in his lord's skewered roast (*Han Feizi*, 10.595–96). A similar incident made it into Western Han legal records. Among a catalogue of judicial inquiries excavated in 1983–84 at Zhangjiashan (Jiangling, Hubei) is a case of a couple wishing to impeach their maid servant for dropping a hair in their broiled meat and leaving a piece of grass in their rice (*Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian*, 225–26, case 19). A detailed investigation follows concluding that neither the person chopping nor the person broiling the meat was guilty. The hair appeared to have been blown into the food by a fan, and the so-called grass turned out to be a fiber from the maid's worn-out shirt. To conclude the case the plaintiffs are ordered to buy the maid a new shirt instead.

Eating and Custom

In ancient China, as elsewhere, food and foodways were interpreted as markers of cultural difference and criteria for moral judgment. Such moral judgments were based on the types of foodstuffs that were deemed "edible" as well as the prevailing etiquette. Attitudes toward food were conceived along two polarities, in space and in time. First, distinctions were made between food cultures of a civilized heartland and those of the non Hua-Xia or "barbarian" periphery. Second, moral judgment was inspired by an idealized dichotomy that set an archaic age of simplicity, sobriety and purity apart from a contemporary age associated with decadence, overindulgence, and an imbalanced diet.[6]

A number of texts specify certain food taboos or cooking techniques as identifying features of barbarism. In fact most sensory perceptions in early China were drawn into a moral universe. For instance "sound" was often synonymous with "reputation," "color" could equal sex or worldly allure, fragrance was regularly associated with spiritual luminescence, and an appreciation for flavor often symbolized good "moral taste," the capability to "savor" talent, and so on.

Cultural comments on food are omnipresent. In the *Zuozhuan* a nobleman belonging to the Rong tribes states: "Our drink, our food, and our cloths are all different from those of the Chinese states . . ." (*Zuozhuan*, 1007 [Xiang 14]; Schaberg 2001, 132–33). Yet this emphasis on difference was raised more vociferously from the Chinese side. While equally craving to satisfy their desires as all human beings, barbarians, according to the *Lüshi chunqiu*, have different preferences for sound, color and flavor (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 19.1294, 24.1584, 25.1053). In the *Guoyu*, we find the Rong and Di barbarians described as resembling animals whose "blood and *qi*" cannot be controlled and who fail to appreciate nice fragrances and flavors during tribute missions (*Guoyu*, 2.62). The *Liji* describes the Eastern Yi 夷 as tribes who "ate their food without it being cooked with fire." The southern Man 蠻 receive the same ethnographic comment while certain tribes among the western Rong 戎 and northern Di 狄 are said to abstain from cereals.[7]

Succumbing to the temptation of Chinese delicacies such as cooked rice, roast meat, the *geng* stew or wine was equivalent to submission to Chinese rule. It appears that the Central States occasionally exploited foreign taste buds to lure barbarians into submission. For instance Duke Mu of Qin 秦慕公 (r. 659–621 BCE) offered female musicians and cooks to the king of the Rong, who were "unacquainted with the five musical tones and five flavors." These gifts allegedly tricked the king into debauchery and made him lose political control: "he was delighted, and as a result went astray, causing great disorder in his state and holding drinking parties that went on day and night with no pause for rest" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 23.1568–69, 24.1584; Riegel 2000, 598, 606). Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BCE) proposed that broiled or roasted meats in eating houses on the borders of the Han empire would attract the Xiongnu into submission (*Xinshu*, 4.135–37).

The attachment of moral judgment to the consumption of alcohol appears to be true of all places and times. Condemnations of alcohol addiction and its perverse effects on morals and government can already be found in Zhou bronze inscriptions, and a chapter belonging to the earliest strata of the *Shangshu* (Book of Documents) entitled "The Pronouncement on Alcohol" ("Jiu gao" 酒告) contains the oldest sustained exhortation against the use of alcohol in Chinese history. The "Pronouncement" condemns the last Shang rulers for their overindulgence in drink and stages King Wen (or possibly the Duke of Zhou) instructing his officials that people should drink only when they are sacrificing. The celebratory consumption of alcohol is only permitted after one's filial duties have been successfully completed: once the elderly and the ruler have been cared for "you may satiate yourselves

with food and drink." Toward the end of the "Pronouncement" the last descendent of the once virtuous Shang kings is denounced for his drinking and eating habits, alleged to have been so hedonic that the spirits "could smell their stench on high." The Zhou therefore would pledge to monitor the intake of alcohol, arrest groups gathering to drink, and give counsel to Shang ministers and officials addicted to alcohol (*Shangshu*, 14.14a–24a).

The "Pronouncement" may be the first narrative that separates secular alcohol consumption from the sacrificial use of alcohol, condemning the former. This tension between secular eating and drinking on the one hand versus the sacrificial use of food and drink is a theme that pervades late Zhou and early imperial discussions on sacrifice, which frequently insist that the secular consumption of food and drink should be preceded by the correct provision of foodstuffs for the spirits. Opinions on how to curb alcohol consumption during sacrificial gatherings and banquets were rife. According to Sima Qian, the introduction of court ritual at the beginning of the Han was partly meant to restrict the excessive use of alcohol:

> The rearing of pigs (to feast on grain-fed animals) and the making of wine (with the adjunct of drinking) were not intended to cause disaster. Yet when criminal charges and litigations grew increasingly in number, it was the result of excessive wine drinking. Therefore the kings of ancient times instituted the ritual for wine drinking. With one toast, the host and the guests are obliged to salute each other numerous times. Thus one can drink for the whole day without becoming drunk. This is how the ancients prevented disasters caused by wine drinking. (*Shiji*, 30.1429; *Liji*, 37.997; Poo 1999, 138)

The "Pronouncement" would not be the last prohibition on alcohol to be promulgated in Chinese history, nor were all bans on alcohol merely inspired by a moral ethos. During the Qin restrictions were put on the production and consumption of alcohol. Similar measures, including rules on the sale of alcohol, were taken during the Han. Han emperors also regularly granted five-day drinking amnesties (*Shiji*, 10.417; *Hanshu*, 6.200, 7.229, 8.267).

Moral judgment associated with eating habits also form a standard element in descriptions of an idealized past. The Laozian portrayal of a utopian society is one in which people imagine coarse food to taste sweet. In these narratives, sages by definition live off little and the kings of antiquity are praised for their moderation in food and drink (*Mozi*, 6.164; *Zhuangzi*, 6.228; *Lüshi chunqiu*, 1.23; *Huainanzi*, 7.232). In contrast the overindulgence in drink, food and games provided a favorite explanation for the decay of a golden era (*Shiji*, 87.2553). At the other end of these portrayals picturing the past as a pristine era when people consumed natural products in modesty, were narratives that identified the origins of civilization with the invention of cooking, the use of culinary implements, and the preference for cooked over raw meat. For instance, according to a passage in

the *Guanzi*, the Yellow Emperor "invented drill and speculum for starting fires in order to cook dishes made of strong-smelling vegetables and tainted meat. The people were then able to eat them without suffering stomach poisoning and the empire was transformed by it" (*Guanzi*, 24.630; cf. Sterckx 2002, 94–96, 275, n. 7).

The Politics of Banqueting

Banquets and feasts provided a scene where matters of political honor were settled. Banquets also presented diverse scenarios for the judgment of human character. The ancients, according to the *Zuozhuan*, laid on entertainments and feasts to observe the demeanor of their guests and examine their future bad or good fortune (*Zuozhuan*, 869 [Cheng 15]): "In the administration of the world, feudal lords pay court to one another in the leisure left after their duties to the Son of Heaven. For this purpose they have ritual banquets and feasts. With banquets they inculcate reverence and frugality; with feasting they demonstrate kindness and generosity" (*Zuozhuan*, 857–58 [Cheng 12]; tr. Schaberg 2001, 244).

The historical records and ritual canon contain ample evidence showing that banquets were rule-infested gatherings. Such elaborate requirements of etiquette and ritual propriety often solicited praise from Confucian literati but equally provoked the scorn of others. The *Huainanzi* for one points out that just as an overload of military commands plunges an army into chaos, excessive rules during drinking parties would lead to disputes (*Huainanzi*, 14.484–85). The underlying moral message here is the Daoist advocacy of minimal intervention by means of rules and regulations and in support of spontaneity and natural harmony.

An exhaustive account of banquets, feasting and etiquette in early China would require a separate volume altogether. For our purpose I present a sample of banqueting rules and incidents. These illustrate how the communal consumption of food was intricately linked with ritual and politics. Ritual treatises contain extensive guidelines on banqueting. These range from table etiquette to the welcoming of visitors and guests, the spatial distribution of dishes, the order and sequence in which dishes were to be served and eaten to close-up descriptions of drinking, toasting and even methods of chewing. An example from the *Liji*:

> In all cases the rules for serving dishes (for an entertainment) are the following: The meat cooked on the bones is set on the left, and the sliced meat on the right; the rice is placed on the left of the parties on the mat, and the stew on their right; the minced and roasted meat are put on the outside and the pickles and sauces on the inside; the onions and steamed onions at the end, and the wines and broths are placed to the right. When slices of dried and spiced meat are put down, where they are folded is turned to the left with the ends put to the right. If a guest is of lower rank (than the host), he should take up the rice, rise

> and decline (the honor he is receiving). The host then rises and objects to the guest's (request to retire). After this the guest resumes his seat. When the host leads the guests to present an offering, they offer rice followed by the dishes that were first brought in. Going on from the meat cooked on the bones, they present offerings of all the other dishes. After they have eaten rice three times, the host will invite the guests to take of the sliced meat, from which they will go on to all the other meats. When the host has not yet gone over all the dishes, a guest should not rinse his mouth with wine. (*Liji*, 3.51–56)

A lack of "savoir vivre" while dining likewise attracted comments from the ritualists:

> Do not roll rice into a ball; do not bolt down the various dishes; do not swill down (the soup). Do not make a noise in eating; do not crunch the bones with the teeth; do not put back fish you have been eating; do not throw bones to the dogs; do not snatch (at what you want). Do not spread out the rice; do not use chopsticks in eating millet. Do not gulp down broth, nor add condiments to it; do not keep picking the teeth, nor gulp down sauces. If a guest adds condiments, the host should apologize for not having had the soup better prepared. If he wills down the sauces; the host will apologize for his poverty. Soft and juicy meat may be split with the teeth, but dried flesh may not . . ., (*Liji*, 3.57–59; Chang 1977, 38–39)

Incidents involving bad table manners abound in the literature. One story tells of a rustic who stumbled upon a fish sauce he was very fond of. Disliking the idea of having to share it, he spat into it. This angered his dining companions so that they blew their noses into his sauce and left (*Xin lun*, 22a). In another story one of Confucius's disciples reprimands someone for being overtly concerned with cleanness and in the habit of removing the top layer of a dish before eating: "You should not do this. It gives the impression that you have some ulterior motive. In the old days, when the superior men were given grants of wine and food they were duty-bound to taste it. They shunned throwing away food. If the food was suitable for eating there was no reason to choose between the upper and the lower layers. If the food was thought unclean, the lower portion of it was regarded as more so" (*Kong Congzi*, 13.90–91; tr. Ariel, 138). Others defended the teaching of good table manners as a method to foster filial piety and respect for the elderly (*Guanzi*, 25.638). Daughters-in-law and sons, according to the *Liji*, were to serve their husbands' parents with all available dishes and encourage them at all times to eat to the full while being content to eat the leftovers themselves (*Liji*, 27.728, 27.734). Thus moral judgments about wealth and abundance, modesty and propriety, integrity or lasciviousness were condensed into the miniature world that surrounded the meal.

A repeated theme in the literature is the use of the banquet or drinking party as a ploy to trick or humiliate political opponents. Such "plots of the palate" included attempted assassinations or the detention of one or more guests, deliberate food poisoning, and ritualized character competitions to provoke the wrath or vengeance of one or several of the dining partners.[8] On one occasion in 514 BCE a king is stabbed during a banquet with a dagger hidden inside a fish (*Zuozhuan*, 1484 [Zhao 27]). Another famous episode is the banquet held at Hongmen in 206 BCE at which Han founder Liu Bang 劉邦 narrowly escaped an assassination attempt while being hosted by his opponent.[9] Poisoning occured regularly and several tasters are recorded to have died after tasting the food and drink of their masters (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 19.1256; *Zuozhuan*, 297 [Xi 4]).

Overindulgence in drink during banquets no doubt regularly led to outbursts of violence. One saying held that wine goblets were not to be moved during banquets to avoid the banqueters from starting a brawl (*Fengsu tongyi*, 564; cf. also *Zhuangzi*, 4.158). Feigning drunkenness and leaving a banquet could save one's life. Once when Emperor Hui 惠帝 (r. 195–188 BCE) hosted his older brother, the King of Qi, by seating him on the seat of honor—as was customary courtesy among members of the same family—Empress Lü 呂 put two goblets with poison before the king and demanded that he propose a toast. When the emperor intended to join in the toast she quickly overturned his goblet, thereby arousing suspicion with the King of Qi who pretended to be drunk and left the scene (*Shiji*, 9.398). Others used wine to cloud the senses of their advisors. Cao Shen 曹參 (d. 190 BCE), prime minister under Emperor Hui, spent his days and nights drinking strong wine. Anyone who approached him to remind him of his duties was treated to rounds of drink, so that in the end, visitors stumbled away drunk while ministerial clerks hung around their dormitory in a state of perpetual inebriation (*Shiji* 54.2029–30; *Yantie lun*, 10.130).

Stinginess during a banquet on the part of a host could lead to dire political consequences. The latter is illustrated in the story of King Qing Feng 慶封 of Qi (d. 538 BCE), a notorious drinker who would not hesitate to exchange his wives and concubines with his favorite guests. He was in the habit of providing two chickens daily during public meals at the palace. When his cook one day secretly substituted ducks for chickens and offered soup instead of meat to two retainers from Qi, they condemned the serving as an insult. Their fury sparked conspiracies that led to the exile of the powerful usurping minister (*Zuozhuan*, 1145–46 [Xiang 28]; *Guoyu*, 3.109). In another incident a duke's refusal to allow one of his guests to feast on a turtle dish after he had dipped his finger in it set off a feud that eventually led to an assassination (*Zuozhuan*, 677–78 [Xuan 4]; *Guoyu*, 5.202; *Han Feizi*, 16.878). At times public humiliations were taken to the extreme. This was the case when a once prime minister in the state of Qin went through great efforts to humiliate an envoy of the state of Wei. He prepared a lavish banquet, invited all the envoys of the other feudal rulers to sit with him in the upper part of the hall, where vast quantities of food and

drink were served. The envoy instead was seated in the lower part of the hall, had chopped hay and beans placed before him, and was guarded by two tattooed criminals on either side who forced him "to feed like a horse" (*Shiji*, 79.2414).

Finally, banquets and drinking pledges provided a stage where a gentleman or warrior's proper grasp of the rules of chivalry and ritual propriety could be tested (e.g. *Zuozhuan*, 1078–79 [Xiang 23]). Seating arrangements were the spatial expression of the hierarchical relationships between a host and his guests. Most frequently the place of honor at a banquet was a seat that allowed the guest to face east. The military used banquets and feasts to reward military merit, and symbolically confirm rank and file among the troops. In order to stimulate one's officers, the strategist Wu Qi 吳起 (440–381 BCE) argued that men of accomplishment ought to be identified and honored with a grand feast as this would also serve to encourage those who failed to accomplish anything notable. Following this advice his lord spread out sitting mats in the ancestral temple hall, arrayed in three rows, and organized a feast for the officers and chief officers. Distinguished officers sat in the front row and were entertained with the finest foods together with three meats served on the most valuable dishes. Those ranking next in accomplishment sat in the middle row and were feasted with fine food served on less lavish vessels. Those without merit were seated in the last row and served food on ordinary utensils (*Wuzi*, 6.10).

Conclusion

Cooking, diet and dining in early China provided a platform for the discussion of human government, the construction and affirmation of social hierarchies and the judgment of moral behaviour. In cutting, chopping, dividing, blending, and proportioning ingredients, the cook embodied crafts that were transferable, in simile and metaphor, to the art of government. The exchange of sacrificial meats, the acceptance or refusal of food gifts and the social interplay and etiquette during banquets and feasts could reinforce or break political alliances and kinship relations. Within the extended family, the state or the empire at large, the distribution of food and drink underpinned ethical expectations of propriety toward fellow humans and the spirit world. Within the confines of the human body, a balanced diet complemented with controlled food avoidances or preferences during the liminal stages of life, formed the physical substrate for a morally accomplished and psychologically healthy existence.

The act of cooking and food consumption contained within itself a creative tension between notions of harmony, order and proportion on the one hand and the potential for indulgence and immoderation on the other. Chinese thinkers and ritualists exploited culinary and dietary culture as a moral pendulum as it moved back and forth between the extremes of fasting and feasting, offering and receiving, physical nourishment and ritual purification. Eating united and divided, and this applied both to the physiology of

the human body, the predilections of the palate as well as the character of the consuming and nourishing subjects. And whereas the detached sage in the *Zhuangzi* may have dismissed the priests' warning about the river god's dislike of oxen with white foreheads or pigs with upturned snouts, it is clear that to the majority of noblemen and moralists in early China worldly and sacrificial menus did matter (*Zhuangzi*, 4.177).

Notes

1. Detailed references to Chinese and Japanese scholarship on food production are listed in Sterckx (forthcoming), which also includes a more extensive survey of Zhou and Han cuisine.
2. For examples of various meat stews see *Huainanzi*, 10.335, 19.654; *Liji*, 27.744, 27.748. For vegetable stew see e.g. *Zuozhuan*, 86 (Huan 2). Another poor man's soup was known as *li geng* 藜羹 "chenopod broth." Confucius was forced to have it, without rice, during his troubled passage between Chen and Cai. See *Zhuangzi*, 28.981; *Mozi*, 9.303.
3. See the 12 *ji* 紀 chapters in the *Lüshi chunqiu*, and later versions of the "monthly ordinances."
4. *Shiji*, 5.189, 12.462, 28.1390, 105.2809–10, 121.3123; *Huainanzi*, 13.454, 20.668; *Shuoyuan*, 6.125. The use of liquor to flush out the toxicity of horse meat is documented in later dietetic literature such as Sun Simiao's (581–682) 孫思邈 *Beiji qianjin yaofang* 備急千金藥方, but I am not aware of any explanation for the toxicity of horse liver in contemporary sources. See Engelhardt (2001), 182, 186.
5. A detailed account of the figure of Yi Yin appears in Sterckx (forthcoming).
6. Similar polarities identifying "otherness" with food consumption were discussed by several authors in Graeco-Roman antiquity. See Garnsey (1999), 65–81.
7. For a similar statement see *Huainanzi*, 1.18–19, where Gao You 高誘 comments that "abstaining from grain" means having a diet solely consisting of meat and fermented milk. A similar description of the Hu diet occurs in *Hanshu*, 49.2285.
8. For examples see *Zuozhuan*, 152 [Huan 18], 659 [Xuan 2], 677–78 [Xuan 4], 1145–46 [Xiang 28], 1724 [Ai 25]; *Guoyu*, 1.28–29; *Zhanguo ce*, 29.1050. For a failed assassination attempt during a banquet at the court of the Southern Yue, see *Shiji*, 113.2972–73.
9. The banquet is described in full in Yü Ying-shih, "Han China," in Chang 1977, 63–65. Yü questions the identification of a mural discovered at Luoyang (dated between 48 and 7 BCE) with the actual banquet reported by Sima Qian. For an excerpt of the mural see Huang (2000), 102–03.

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CHAPTER THREE

When Princes Awake in Kitchens: Zhuangzi's Rewriting of a Culinary Myth

ROMAIN GRAZIANI

The brief encounter between the butcher and the prince recounted in the *Zhuangzi* has been blessed by a long exegetical tradition in China and the West and has thus been firmly implanted in the Chinese imaginative world.[1] Oddly enough, however, and indeed in contrast to the lesson of the ox that it portrays, the story has yet to be dissected according to its inherent structure. This structure might be said to center around four essential themes: the supposed location, either Prince Wenhui's 文惠 kitchens or, according to another interpretation, a sacrificial site; the culinary act, namely the slaughtering of an ox, an animal highly coveted in sacrifice; the symbolic and ritual value of nourishment, and the overcoming of these values according to the practice of *yang sheng* 養生 "nourishing life"; and, finally, the written encounter, or more specifically, the subversive rewriting of a common Warring States tale of a minister-cook meeting his sovereign. Might the lack of attention paid to the question of nourishment be attributed to those who have attempted to harness the story's meaning by neglecting its key ingredients, and who have thus uncovered no more than a philosophical reduction? Or might it be that they have only tasted a small morsel in order to nourish arguments that, ultimately, have little to do with the story? Either way it would seem propitious to look at the story in its entirety, and savor it with a new and, hopefully, more palatable approach.

Let us briefly recapitulate the main plot of the story that appears in a short chapter entitled "Yang sheng zhu" 養生主 ("Mastery in the Nourishment of Life"), which, like the other inner chapters, has been attributed to the figure of Zhuangzi himself. It presents a butcher-cook, Ding 丁, who carves an ox for his prince. His accomplished technique and graceful ease stirs the prince's admiration. Questioned by his lord, Ding claims that what he seeks lies beyond his craft: he delights not so much in the butchering itself but rather in operating according to the Dao. Ding's account of how he subtly moves his immaculate blade along the anatomy of

the carcass delights his lord, who, in the end, takes his cook's words as a powerful lesson in the art of nourishing life.[2]

In an effort to avoid reducing this story to an enjoyable "lesson for life" episode, illustrated by means of a craft analogy, the story must be read in a dialectical association with the themes of government and power, which are treated either directly or indirectly in all texts from the Warring States period. In this parodic palimpsest offered up by the Cook Ding story, Zhuangzi opposes traditional narratives that present the culinary arts and the blending of flavors as a metaphor for politics and human government.

In general terms, the personal experience of Cook Ding as it is told to the prince helps to undermine the values associated with the kitchen on the one hand and the sacrificial altar on the other; to separate the human relationship of food preparation and nourishment which is at the origin of the ritual from any possible moral or ritual connotations; and, lastly, to redefine the meaning of *yang sheng* as depicted by Mencius in his famous exchange with King Hui of Liang 梁惠王. Zhuangzi therefore outlines a new relationship between physical nourishment and self-cultivation, which is devoid of the widespread political rhetoric of the five flavors, the concerns of government and the physical exercises as practiced by adepts in search of longevity.

Subverting a *Locus Classicus* of Ritual Literature

While we are undeniably in the presence of two figures who represent superior and inferior social strata, namely a sovereign and a butcher-cook, one might also argue that we are faced with two gentlemen each of whom is accomplished in his own sphere, the prince of a state and a master of life. The former is bestowed with the qualities of "outer kingship" and the latter is endowed with "inner wisdom" (*wai wang* 外王 and *nei sheng* 内聖). In this story, as is common in so many of Zhuangzi's craft analogies, a menial, to the extent that proper language will permit, shares his secret of inner power with his nominal superior.

Beyond this more common theme in Chinese philosophical literature, the relationship between the two men is mediated by food: the former prepares the ox and the latter is meant presumably to eat the beef. The staging of social hierarchy through a food-based activity, however, is distorted from the start: as a butcher, Ding should provide food for his lord, but, in doing so, Ding above all nourishes himself, nurtures his own vitality. Zhuangzi thus underlines Ding's emancipation from his menial status. If the story's opening sentence explains that Ding is cutting an ox for the prince, the description that follows suggests that Ding is driven more by a desire for his own inner nourishment than a sense of duty to cater to his lord. The unrestrained and rhythmic gestures of a butcher totally immersed in his task and the joyous atmosphere this creates around him, enable Ding to forget the toilsome aspects of his job. He even goes so far as to claim that he enjoys the efficacy of an inner spiritual force (*shen* 神) while butchering the ox carcass.

Thus while it would appear that Ding is fulfilling his role as steward, catering or caring for his lord is, in fact, merely a secondary activity. When enthusiastically questioned, Ding confesses that he is hardly concerned with the technical and culinary aspects of his art which might be a source of delight to his master. On the contrary, Ding seizes the opportunity to give his master a moral lesson and thereby inverts the traditional hierarchy which places those who prepare food in the service of their masters. Instead of embarking on a discussion of the moral influence that well-flavored food might exert on his ruler's physique, Zhuangzi presents a character who influences his lord's mind directly through an informal explanation of his craft. Cook Ding transcends his original task by enlightening his prince on how he nourishes life within himself. This image of a butcher liberating himself from the servile fate of his social rank also reinforces the idea of individual independence from the mechanisms of subjection through food. It is precisely by grounding himself in his servile task of cutting meat that Cook Ding liberates himself from his inferior social status.

The encounter is all the more penetrating for its disregard of all the various positions which constitute the hierarchy governing culinary practices. Butchery is traditionally among the lowliest professions in the long chain of activities stretching from the slaughter of an animal to its sacrificial offering.[3] Numerous texts dealing with the practice of culinary activity and sacrifice at the court have pointed out that the tasks of cooks and other preparatory officials ought to be distinguished from the ritual offices dealing with the actual sacrifice. Such a division of labor creates an irreducible gap between the cook and his prince. Yet in this story, the meeting's informality affords Ding a more personal voice, devoid of political connotations, in which he divulges his experience and craftsmanship.

Within the culinary world, Ding's craft is the most base when compared to those officers who are charged with the more elevated tasks of preparing ingredients. It is similarly the most morbid because it deals with the dismembering of the animal as opposed to the more virtuous process of recombining ingredients. Nonetheless, Ding's approach reveals an incomparable degree of dynamism and subtlety. In carving the dead animal, Ding accesses the spiritual power and the vital nourishment that those officers who are dedicated to preparing the food offer to the body of their sovereign. The story, therefore, might be read as a polemical rewriting of a literary *locus classicus* of Zhuangzi's era, namely an encounter between a prince and his chief cook. Zhuangzi's rewriting of this theme plays on the tensions between ritual and spiritual values with which the paradigm of nourishment is invested in these moralizing tales.

As pointed out in the previous chapter of this volume, food-officers figure frequently in Warring States texts. Often, their meeting with a sovereign, following a speech on a political subject, leads to the chefs rising to a position of high office. In an era when rival sovereigns competed with one another to attract human talents of all sorts to their courts, the proverbial encounter between a cook or steward and his superior bolstered the

idea that an individual of humble origins might be promoted to political office.

The character of the cook was intricately linked to royal power in pre-imperial China. This was due in large part to the symbolic value of sharing food and its offering to ancestors in sacrificial religion as well as the lack of any distinction between the cosmological, dietetic and nutritional values associated with food. The story of Yi Yin's 伊尹 exceptional career, promoted to minister after demonstrating his political intelligence through his ability to manipulate and combine ingredients, exemplifies such a narrative (Sterckx 2003, 72–79). The Yi Yin legend, recounted in numerous Warring States and Han texts, might have already enjoyed a wide audience in the first decades of the third century BCE.[4]

The story of Ding however does not offer any transparent analogies with the art of government, nor does it link instructions on self-cultivation to a supreme form of governmental skill in the same way as the Yi Yin narrative. The traditional images of a seasoned harmony of flavors that contribute to a well-balanced kingdom are replaced by the carving of an animal which has a direct impact on the prince's vitality and awakens him to the authentic art of self-nourishment. It is noteworthy, then, that in this scene, where an accomplished butcher-cook is cast as a true master of life, nothing is said about eating, nor is there any mention of the delicacy of the meat chosen and prepared to enchant the prince's palate. In this sense, the carving of the ox does not serve as a political metaphor in the same way as the culinary practices and, specifically, the manipulation of flavors presented in the Yi Yin story. While this critical dimension of the *Zhuangzi* remains implicit in the dialogue, it is fully developed in the appropriation of the theme of *yang sheng*, "nourishing life."

Confucian Eating Habits and Zhuangzi's Reappropriation of Yang Sheng

To fully grasp the polemical significance of the encounter between Cook Ding and the prince, it is necessary to turn to a passage in the Mencius that Zhuangzi no doubt had in mind when drafting his story. It concerns a well-known dialogue between Mencius and King Hui of Liang, a famous figure in the Warring States period. Born ca. 400 BCE son of King Wu 武 of Wei 魏, he enjoyed an exceptionally long reign (369–319 BCE) and was therefore not only a contemporary of Mencius but also of Zhuangzi, whose approximate date of birth was ca. 369 BCE.[5] After having established himself as the most powerful sovereign, he suffered a series of military defeats against Qi and Qin which obliged him to forge political alliances with his enemies. He thus abandoned his immediate ambitions and offered large stipends to attract worthies to his court such as Zou Yan 鄒衍, Chunyu Kun 淳於髡, and Mencius.[6]

The *Mencius* begins then with the famous meeting of the eponymous philosopher and the king in which the latter claims to fully devote his heart

and energy (*jin xin* 盡心) to improving his state while the population remains stagnant.[7] While the king hopes to receive advice on how to benefit (*li* 利) his cause and increase his wealth, Mencius reprimands him with a moral litany urging him to abandon the pursuit of personal profit and cultivate the virtues of benevolence and righteousness (*ren yi* 仁義). In fact, Mencius's discussion is focused on the most appropriate means of handling food and maintaining one's vital resources in practicing such virtues. Mencius thus makes the theme "nourishing life" (*yang sheng*) a key image: he offers the unfortunate king advice on the proper management, improvement and use of vital resources (fish, grain, wood, and husbandry) in order to provide abundantly for his people. He then chastises Hui for filling his kitchens with an abundance of meat while feeding his pigs and dogs with the provisions destined for his people. His subjects starve at the roadside and the granaries remain closed. In short, Mencius accuses the king of killing his own people, not by sword but through his mismanagement of the state. Ultimately, King Hui receives only reprimands from a Mencius who holds him in extremely low regard.

In the fictitious encounter presented in the *Zhuangzi*, the theme of *yang sheng* nominally remains, but the focus has moved from an emphasis on government to self-cultivation—from the problem of nourishing the state to that of nourishing one's personal vitality.[8] As a result, the question of *yang sheng*, an expression used by both Mencius and Cook Ding in addressing their respective sovereigns, is interiorized in the *Zhuangzi* and stripped of its association with governing the exterior. He thus relieves Prince Wenhui from the social burdens that accompany his status and liberates him from enslavement by his desire for wealth without engaging in a theoretical lesson on the moral dilemma of personal profit versus benevolence and justice.

Admittedly, Zhuangzi's story distinguishes itself by its unpolished and straightforward style from the ritual paraphernalia and language that accompanies culinary imagery in ritual texts as well as the fastidious rules of conduct demonstrated in ceremonial banquets. Prince Wenhui is confronted with the sound of raw meat falling from the carcass like lumps of earth to the ground and accounts of the impact of the butcher's skill on the condition of the knife's blade. In contrast to the ritual aesthetics of the banquet or the subtle art of cooking, Zhuangzi presents a peculiar aesthetic of self-cultivation.

To begin with, Ding's prosaic activity is elevated to the level of an aesthetic and spiritual experience which takes the body as its object. In this sense, Ding works as much on his own as the animal's body. The butcher's knife is less a simple tool than a conduit for his vital energy (akin to a brush in the art of painting). In the butcher's gestures, Zhuangzi locates the aesthetic perfection of a ritual act in a ceremonial context. The very handling of a knife plunged into a smelly mass of meat and blood, the opposite of the officers' ritual washing and abstention of meat before sacrificial ceremonies, is transformed into a virtuous act in which the cook's entire body performs a revitalizing choreography displayed in the rhythmic twists and turns of his

knees, arms, shoulders, and feet. These dancing postures are said to be in resonance with the ancient "Air of the Mulberry Grove,"[9] as if the ox assumes the organic role of a partner. Music and dance, two central elements in ritual, unite Ding and the carcass he dissects. The transformation of a victim into meat, the reference to dynastic music, the presence of a sovereign and the efficacy of the *shen*; all of these elements serve to re-stage, on a symbolic level, the social order in the kitchen. The simple act of meat-carving, beyond all the rituals associated with food, becomes an occasion for feast, pleasure and music.[10]

By means of a skilfull inversion, Zhuangzi engages in a moral rehabilitation of the kitchen against the admonitions of ritualists who held that the morally accomplished gentleman should keep his distance from the scene of slaughter. It is suggestive that the discussion which takes place following their fortuitous encounter cannot, for simple material reasons, take place in an official hall. Ding is not summoned to meet his lord, rather he meets him on his own territory, so to speak; it is the king who is received and their interview thus eschews the formal trappings of a meeting between a superior and his subjects. Yet kings are not supposed to be running around in kitchens. The entire scenario therefore echoes that other famous episode in the *Mencius* (1A.7) where King Xuan of Qi (r. 319–301 BCE) is shocked by the sight of a shivering sacrificial ox being carried to the offering of a ritual bell in a blood consecration. Unable to withstand the frightened gaze of the ox and moved by feelings of guilt, he orders that a sheep be offered in its place. Mencius, upon hearing this tale, jumps at the opportunity to suggest that King Xuan's reaction reveals a sense of benevolence and urges him to adopt a similar attitude toward his people. While this passage in the Mencius is turned toward the moral conscience of the king, the encounter with the sacrificial ox and with death remains noteworthy. Indeed Mencius goes so far as to admit that such an encounter would be unbearable and for this reason suggests that "a gentleman stays away from the kitchens."[11] A gentleman distances himself from internal emotional conflicts and avoids a sense of guilt associated with the shedding of blood, even in a sacrificial context.

In contrast to this sentimental demonstration with moralistic overtones, Zhuangzi's prince delights in his cook's dexterous dissection of the ox. The prince is hardly disturbed by his conscience, rather he is enchanted by the energy and enthusiasm with which Ding plunges his knife into the body. To be sure, Ding's ox is dead and unable to stir the prince's sympathy with his pitiful gaze. But Ding has most certainly selected and witnessed his victim and, above all, agreed to its slaughter. Most of all, in contrast to Mencius's King Xuan, Zhuangzi's prince takes delight in the scene. The story of Cook Ding throws us into an amoral world where one does not simply substitute one animal for another in a hypocritical attempt to relieve one's conscience. Zhuangzi's kitchen is no longer a grim abattoir which offers only the revolting sight of meat and thus merits Mencius's appellation, a "place of execution" (*si di* 死地).[12] Rather this site becomes a space for self-cultivation

where the movement of the knife in the animal's dead body is sustained by the free expression of his spiritual impulse (*shen yu* 神欲). Zhuangzi has transferred the *shen* from the altar to the kitchen, where a prince is received by his cook surrounded by raw meat.

The notion of preparing meat to nourish life is even more poignant because Zhuangzi plays with the religious values traditionally associated with this food. The ox was a standard and highly valued sacrificial victim whose offering regenerated bonds between the living and the dead.[13] Ancestors, once elevated to the status of spirits (*shen*), wielded power over the harvest which fed the bodies of the living and maintained their health. In return, the living offered a portion of their food. During the sacrifice, the ox provided the material medium to communicate with the spirits, as they rejoiced in the aromas which ascended to the heavens. Yet in Cook Ding's case, it is during the activity itself of turning the animal into an offering that the efficacy of *shen* becomes manifest. *Shen* appears no longer as a transcendent spirit sought through sacrifice but rather emerges as a superior form of corporal activity.[14] Ding's base task of butchering is transformed into refined artistry: by interacting with the ox with his *shen* instead of his eyes, the massive, inert presence of the ox becomes an opportunity for play and easeful manipulation.

The question of material nourishment is therefore simultaneously avoided and preserved. By simple explanation of his method for transforming an animal into consumable food, without consuming it himself, Ding gives his lord a powerful hint on how to exalt his vitality through a graceful state of inspiration. The fact that a butcher, through the carving of meat, enjoys the efficiency of *shen*, suggests that Ding has reappropriated a power generally reserved for the nobility or "meat eaters," whose legitimacy was premised on sacrifices to the ancestors and the exchange of meat.[15]

Ding wholly masters his ox carcass; the movement of his knife is guided by a clairvoyance which is exclusive of any intervention of the senses. His state of being is reminiscent of the representative of the dead in a sacrificial ritual whose body serves as a temporal host for visiting spirits. In both actual sacrificial practice as well as in Zhuangzi's reappropriated version of this religious act of communication, the *shen* is "nourished." Yet this occurs in two radically distinct modes: through ancestral spirits on the one hand and through a supreme degree of vital activity on the other.[16] The link between *shen* as an ancestral spirit and *shen* as a supreme form of vital energy becomes clear when one examines how the notion of *shen* was transformed in the tradition of self-cultivation.[17] It will be the butcher who knows the *shen* while preparing the food (in this case understood as spiritual efficiency, as an inner power which pushes one ineluctably and faultlessly forward) and not the *shen* (understood as ancestral spirits or divinities) that is nourished through the offering of food. In this sense, the peculiar relationship with food shifts from the nourishment of spirits to the nourishment of life, from *yang shen* 養神 to *yang sheng* 養生.

A New Model of Self-Cultivation

The knife that never dulls and graciously moves through the empty spaces between muscles and sinews mirrors the idea that Ding's own vital energy is preserved by adapting spontaneously to the difficulties and hurdles he encounters.[18] The entire process of transforming the animal into something edible induces a significant change in Ding's perception. Ding ceases to perceive the ox carcass as an "object" (*objectum*, in the sense that the ox's bodily mass clouds the butcher's vision and prevents him from detecting the animal's inner structure). Ding's unhindered gestures of cutting and slicing the ox are guided by a new sort of intelligence that is no longer inspired by the outer shape of the animal. He has conquered the impediments of his own senses and reached a state of inspiration in which his hands take precedence over his eyes. It is only through the long tradition of self-cultivation and the previous psychological reflections on vital energy that this story is able to liberate the notion of *shen* from the religious sphere and conceive of it, no longer as a transcendent spiritual entity, but as the optimal mode of an internal dynamic, as an immanent force that is substituted for traditional approaches.

Similar patterns underlie the dynamics of the conversation itself. Ding's reply to his prince avoids any didactical tone, it falls short of offering a doctrinal message and does not insist on recommendations or advice. It is a simple description of a personal experience obtained from manipulating a tool. Yet the mere simplicity of his personal account enables him to obtain a very powerful and profound influence on his master's spirit. He inspires the prince with a zest that invites the latter to discover a reality to which he had hitherto been blind.

Ding's intimate knowledge of the functioning of things (Dao 道) manifests itself in the form of a particular technique (*ji* 技). To use a technical procedure to access natural processes constitutes a type of enacted knowledge devoid of theory. Moreover, the act of nourishing life and the act of cutting up an ox are not linked simply within the frame of an analogical order. The butcher's prosaic activity constitutes *in itself* an exercise in self-cultivation: by means of his concentrated gestures and skill, Ding activates a "divine" state of mind similar to that presented in self-cultivation texts.

It is in this sense that the story of Cook Ding offers a new perspective on the concept of the "nourishment of life" that steps beyond the familiar self-cultivation tradition of Zhuangzi's time. Practitioners of self-cultivation were devoted to specific instructions in the form of technical exercises (breathing, gymnastics, dietary and sexual techniques), founded on elaborate medical theories. The foundational chapters for the tradition referred to as "the culture of the self"—the chapters on "The Art of the Mind" ["Xinshu" 心術] in the *Guanzi* (among which the "The Inner Workings" ["Nei ye" 內業] appears to date from the end of the fourth century BCE)—recommend that adepts adopt an aligned (*zheng* 正) sitting posture in order

to refine their vital energy (*qi* 氣) and transform it into spiritual energy (*shen* 神). The authors of these texts, literati from the Jixia 稷下 Academy in Qi, had eliminated from their program nearly all material aspects associated with nutritional and therapeutic practices claiming that pure *qi* absorption would enable one to channel and accumulate refined essence (*jing* 精) which would ultimately develop into spiritual energy (*shen*).

Adepts of longevity techniques who engaged in exercises imitating bird or bear movements and specific breathing techniques are mocked in *Zhuangzi*'s chapter fifteen ("Ke yi" 刻意), where such exercises appear restrictive, artificial, forced and devoid of genuine vitality (*Zhuangzi*, 15.535). What is striking in the tale of Cook Ding is its attempt to merge a seemingly banal and tiresome activity (butchering) with a technique which revitalises the body's resources and provides access to the *shen*. Zhuangzi thereby ostensibly reconciles what are traditionally impermeable and independent spheres: the enclosed world of ceremonial rituals where spirits manifest themselves in response to food offerings; the world of adepts of self-cultivation who put their energies into technical exercises (aligned postures, the practice of specific movements, and breathing techniques); and, finally the world of servile, laborious, and repetitive activities illustrated here by the butchering of meat in the service of the prince.

These three distinct spheres pertain to the practice of nourishing the *shen* in markedly distinct fashions. The milieu of self-cultivation might be understood to be acting as an intermediary between the other two since this tradition redefined the *shen* which was linked to the discovery of the inner dimension of the self—conceived not as a transcendent entity but as a spiritual energy that can be stored in the human body through the refinement of one's vital energy. As for Zhuangzi, he "imports" the efficacy of this spiritual energy into the self not by the offering of food, invocation by the *shi* 屍 "personator," nor by quietist practice, but by carving a sacrificial animal. Hence it is the butcher who embodies the *shen* while working on the meat and no longer the *shen* who feeds on the meat offerings. In this story, Zhuangzi breaks with the traditional framework of self-cultivation and shows that it cannot be reduced to a purely technical exercise: even the most mundane and base activity, if performed correctly, offers a way to preserve and enhance one's life and summons a spiritual force to lodge itself within the body.

By reworking, within the space of one single narrative, elements traceable to the ritual banquet as well as concepts linked to the technical tradition of self-cultivation, Zhuangzi redesigns the conditions necessary for a powerful moral transformation. This transformation is only achievable within the remit of an authentic relationship between two figures who are willing to detach themselves (albeit temporarily) from their hierarchical positions as well as any desire for personal gain. This theme of a conscious disinterest in worldly status is central and sets Cook Ding apart from figures like Yi Yin. Whereas the butcher, through his intimate understanding of the Dao, transcends his worldly role as a subordinate provider of foodstuffs and all concomitant strictures, the admiration he incites in his superior does not

lead to a change in his own servile status—Ding does not end up a minister in the manner of Yi Yin. Zhuangzi avoids a reproduction of the traditional narrative in which the political virtues of a loyal servant are praised or an advisor's hidden talents are recognized. In contrast to Yi Yin who, according to some sources, did his utmost to be among king Tang's audience by asking to be received seventy times (*Han Feizi*, 1.49), it is the prince himself who approaches Ding, enthralled by his performance. Ding incarnates a total disinterest in power, he sweeps the prince up in his perspective, he literally pulls the prince up and out of his social position. We hear the voice of Wenhui only twice in the story, at the beginning and the end, but these brief interludes are sufficient to reveal the king's fascination with the freewheeling mastery of Ding's vital activities. First he expresses his wonder at the rhythmic choreography of Ding's carving and, then, in the final scene the king shares in Ding's satisfaction in stating that he "has gained vital nourishment from it" (*de yang sheng yan* 得養生焉). Ding sharpens the prince's mind through his account of his subtle circulation in the inner anatomy of the ox. It is personal well-being that is at play here, a regime of spontaneity embodied in a corporal reality.

We find ourselves then at the opposite extremes of the court literature where encounters between masters and servants become edifying lessons on human government or pretexts for social mobility among the lower classes.[19] Zhuangzi presents a craftsman disinterested in social promotion, a butcher happy to share his personal art and satisfaction with an admiring prince. His handling of the knife does not serve to symbolise virtuous talents such as moderation and impartiality, but rather illustrates his capacity to move effortlessly through the difficulties of any given configuration.

Conclusion

Against the background of moralising stories that present the art of government according to the principles of a well-regulated culinary activity and that celebrate the promotion of ordinary men to the ranks of cook-minister (Yi Yin), the stimulating words of Cook Ding and the enchanted approval of his prince appear in bold relief.

In the *yang sheng* tradition, the notion of nourishment as a means to access the efficacy of the spirit world is detached from its religious and ritual elements such as banqueting, sacrifice, ceremony, the hierarchical division of the offerings, and communion with the ancestors. The idea that the *shen* might emerge from a particular way of practicing one's vital activity allows Zhuangzi to demonstrate the achievement of a profound harmonization with the Dao even amidst one of the most vile forms of food preparation. By portraying the act of cutting up a sacrificial animal as the very moment when *shen* manifests itself, Zhuangzi reworks in very personal terms the general idea elaborated among the thinkers of the Jixia academy, namely, the immanence of the *shen* in human beings as a result of the optimal refinement of one's vital energies.[20]

Zhuangzi therefore marginalizes the widespread Warring States image of the culinary act as a symbol for social harmony (as manifested in images like blending flavors, balancing ingredients, or banquet hierarchies). We are faced with an attempt to rid the powerful symbols of worldly possession and government of their diversity in order to produce a relationship, free of all social mediations, which will lead to their profound transformation. The distance between the prince's social self and his inner vitality is reduced. He comes into contact with something more profound, more nutritive, which would usually be clouded by his political status. The strict rules of propriety that fix the king to a rigid social hierarchy are temporarily suspended during their encounter. In order for such a revitalising force to exert a mutual influence, both actors must enter into a relationship without social or moral restraints and without intending to profit personally—in short, a relationship that defies those elements embodied in the typified cook-minister Yi Yin.

Finally, by reflecting on the symbolic values of nourishment brought together in a well-crafted scenario, Zhuangzi is implicitly closely akin to the very modern idea that vital enchantment and spiritual blossoming might find their fulfillment in the most worldly and humble of activities rather than in the exclusive possession of the material conditions for happiness or the privilege to enjoy these. But here we are embarking upon yet another central theme in the Zhuangzi. More precisely, we are touching upon the subjects of the fast and voluntary poverty, which, by their colorful counterpoint to the memorable story of the beef's preparation, would certainly permit a further development of an analysis on the symbolic manifestations of power in the intake of food.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Eno (1996); Billeter (1989), chapter 9; and Billeter (2002). I am greatly indebted to Billeter for his enlightening and profound insights on Cook Ding's story.
2. Among the various readings of this story in both Chinese and Western scholarship, I have benefited particularly from the analysis in Billeter (2002), 15–20.
3. The historical background against which the *Zhuangzi* story should be read is set out by Roel Sterckx in chapter two of this volume. See also Sterckx (2002), 45–61, 76–78.
4. For a discussion of Yi Yin and further references see chapter two, pp. 46–48, in this volume. The myth of minister-cook Yi Yin must have been received widely by the late fourth century since Mencius (5A.8) already denies that Yi Yin's political success ought to be attributed to his culinary skills.
5. Most scholars date the historical Zhuangzi somewhere within the period from 369 to 286 BCE. Wang Baoxuan's (2002, 164) contention that Zhuangzi did not pass away until 268, the year in which the capital of Chu 楚 was taken, appears convincing.
6. For a biographical entry on King Hui see Zheng (2000), 3262. See also Lewis (1999), 619–20, 634.
7. This meeting is alleged to have taken place in the thirty-fifth year of King Hui's reign, i.e., around 334 BCE. For the dialogue see *Mencius*, 1A. 1–3.
8. Cook Ding's meeting with his prince not only lacks historical authenticity, it also appears unreal in parts. It would be virtually unthinkable for a servant in the ritual context of the time to be as vociferous about one's role as Ding: he talks unreservedly in front of his prince, unravels how his experience was the result of a lengthy process, hails his own talent against that of

other butchers and is unambiguous about the supreme joy he derives from his work. Likewise the personalities in the story are dubious. If at all the figure of Wenhui was meant to be a fictitious double of a historical personality, it might perhaps refer to King Hui of Liang as some commentators suggest. It would be problematic to identify an allusion to King Huiwen of Zhao 趙惠文, whose death (266 BCE) does not coincide with the date of the writing of the inner chapters. Given the considerable geographical distance between Zhuangzi's native Song and Qin, it would be even more unlikely to detect an echo in the story of King Huiwen of Qin 秦惠文王 who died in 311. Regardless it is highly likely that Zhuangzi had a knowledge of the Mencius passages since he casts Cook Ding and Prince Wenhui in a scenario that associates them with and opposes them to certain memorable historical and mythical figures: the meeting between Mencius and King Hui of Liang, the unfortunate meeting of King Xuan of Qi with a sacrificial ox (*Mencius*, 1A.7), and the mythical figure of minister-cook Yi Yin.

9. Commentaries note that the "Air of the Mulberry Grove" ("Sang lin" 桑林) dated from the reign of the founder of the Shang, King Cheng Tang (sixteenth century BCE). This might be yet another indication that we are dealing with a rewriting of the myth of Yi Yin as minister-cook.
10. Note however that the actual site of the encounter is never made explicit in the story. One might reasonably suggest that the scene takes place outdoors in a sacrificial site on the occasion of an ox sacrifice. Indeed a *pao ren* 庖人 "cook" could assume both profane and religious duties. Regardless of the exact identification of the scene, the subversive nature of the story remains. If this scene occurs on a sacrificial site, the cook would, spontaneously, attract the presence of the *shen* within himself, a goal his sovereign would attempt to realize in the ritual sacrifice that was meant to follow. Yet since the actual location of the scene is not made explicit, we may safely follow the hypothesis that the encounter happens in a "kitchen" or similar setting.
11. The expression is a commonplace in several texts. See Sterckx (2002), 161, 297, n.191, 297, n. 192.
12. In *Mencius* 1A.7, the expression is first used by King Xuan and next skillfully repeated by Mencius in his retort.
13. See Goossaert (forthcoming), chapters 1–3, and chapter eleven in this volume.
14. On this point see the analysis in Billeter (1989), 269–73; and Billeter (2002), 15–20.
15. See the discussions by Sterckx and Kleeman in chapters two and seven of this volume.
16. By "vital activity," I mean the general and continuous activity of the body as a form which is given life from the interior by the vital breath that constitutes it. This vital activity includes all spontaneous operations through which the body functions, reacts, adapts or regulates itself at any given moment. This stream of impulses allows one's movements, gestures, thoughts and words to manifest themselves and follow each other in a sequence and consistency that exceed the resources of consciousness. It is this invisible spirit of the body's fantastic efficiency, which of itself makes an endless series of unconscious operations possible, that practitioners of *yang sheng* aim to obtain.
17. Graziani (2001), chapter four; Puett (2002), chapter two; Graziani (2003), 31–33.
18. For a classical exegesis of this story in symbolical terms, see Wang Fuzhi's *Zhuangzi jie*, 120–25. Wang claims that the bones in the ox represent the major dangers and disturbances in life. The intervals between the joints stand for the escape from strenuous difficulties, and the delicate handling of the intact knife serves as an image for the possibility to stay away from the harms of the outside world and preserve one's vitality.
19. A typical example is that of Chen Ping discussed in chapter two of this volume.
20. On this theme see e.g. *Guanzi*, XVI.49.405 ("Nei ye") and the discussion in Graziani (2001), chapter four; and Puett (2002), 109–16.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China

MICHAEL PUETT

Anthropologists of contemporary Chinese religion have often pointed out that the lines between spirits, ghosts, and ancestors are highly permeable. Indeed, the primary difference between them is to be found in food—both in the types of food offered and the ways in which it is given. Ghosts are dead humans who are not fed by living descendants (and thus become hungry and highly dangerous, but also objects of offerings by individuals outside of more established avenues of worship); ancestors are fed by their living descendants (and thus are not dangerous and may even be helpful to the descendants); and spirits are fed by larger numbers of people than just simply their descendants (and thus become far more powerful than ghosts or ancestors). Moreover, each of these can become any of the others if the food offerings are changed: a ghost can become an ancestor, an ancestor can become a ghost, a ghost can become a spirit. In other words, it is living humans, through the act of feeding, who define the differences between spirits, ghosts, and ancestors.[1]

This particular view, in fact, is traceable back to the *Liji* (Book of Rites), one of the Five Classics, and the only one devoted explicitly to ritual practice. This historical continuity should not surprise: the sacrificial practices observed by anthropologists were the result of a self-conscious attempt by the state in late imperial China to transform ritual practice at the local level to that prescribed by the earlier ritual texts.

The goal of this paper will be to analyze the visions of food offerings and sacrifice found in the *Liji*. This was once a topic of great scholarly concern, but it is one that has fallen into neglect recently. The reason for this neglect is very simple: with the explosion of archaeological finds over the past few decades, scholars have wisely turned to a study of these paleographic materials to analyze early ritual practice.[2] But we are now in a position to pull

back and analyze these paleographic sources with our received texts, and I argue that in this particular case there is much to be learned by doing so: it is now possible to see how the logic of sacrifice outlined in the *Liji* relates to the practices we are seeing in the paleographic materials, and thus to gain a glimpse of how to link indigenous theories of sacrifice with actual practice. My full argument is that the latter is indeed illuminated by looking at the former, and that, by bringing these sources together, we can begin developing a full history of approaches to sacrifice in early China.[3]

Spirits, Ghosts, and Ancestors in the *Liji*

I turn first to the narrative of the origins of sacrifice in the "Ji fa" 祭法 chapter of the *Liji*. In setting up their claims, the authors distinguish between two different types of sacrifice: sacrifices to the nature spirits and sacrifices to the ancestors. The authors turn first to the former.

According to the authors, the ancient sages recognized that are powers in the cosmos that humans either revered or needed to utilize as resources for their livelihood. As the authors summarize at the end of the chapter:

> When it came to the sun, moon, stars, and constellations, they were what the people looked up to; as for the mountains, forests, rivers, valleys, and hills, these were the places from which the people took their resources to use. If they were not of this type, they were not entered into the sacrificial canon.[4]

The crucial point that the authors make is that these objects were not "spirits" until the sages named them as such:

> The mountains, forests, rivers, valleys, and hills that could send out clouds, make wind and rain, and cause to appear strange phenomena—all were named "spirits" (*shen* 神). (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.3)

"Spirits," then, are a name given by humans to those elements of the natural world that had powers important to humanity. There were no spirits until the sages designated particular phenomena as such.

The sages then set up a proper hierarchy for those who could offer sacrifice to these spirits. For example, a ruler was granted the power to offer sacrifice to all hundred of the designated spirits, while the lords were allowed to offer sacrifice only to those designated spirits on their own land:

> He who possessed all under heaven sacrificed to the hundred spirits. As for the lords of the states: if they [the spirits] were on his land, he sacrificed to them; if they were not on his land, he did not sacrifice to them. (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.3)

Both the hierarchy of the sacrificial system as well as the very object of the sacrifices themselves—namely, the spirits—were defined by human sages simply based upon what those sages deemed significant in the natural world for humans.

The authors turn next to the issue of the ancestral cult. Here again, the sages recognized a set of basic facts in the natural world relevant to humanity. First of all, they recognized that everything on the earth that lives will ultimately die. And, for almost all creatures, this death is the end. But there is one exception: unlike all other creatures, humans remember their dead.

> Generally speaking, as for everything that is born between Heaven and Earth, all of these can be said to have allotments. When the myriad things die, all are said to be cut off; when humans die, they are named "ghosts" (*gui* 鬼). (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.4)

In what would at first appear to be a non sequitur (but is in fact nothing of the sort), the authors then turn immediately to a description of how the sages set up the basic hierarchical divisions of society. Based upon these divisions, land was apportioned—with higher aristocrats receiving more land, lower aristocrats receiving less land, and so on. Ancestral sacrifices, according to the authors, were also set up according to this social hierarchy:

> The kings of all under Heaven divided the land, instituted states, founded cities, and set up towns. They established ancestral temples, ancestral halls, altars, and sacrificial areas, and they offered sacrifices. They thereupon made the divisions for closeness and distance of kinship and for greater and smaller [amounts of land]. (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.5)

Just as land was divided according to hierarchical rank, so were ancestral sacrifices. As the text elaborates, the king was allowed to erect seven ancestral temples. Why would the number of ancestral temples matter? Because, according to the authors, those ghosts who received sacrifices were termed ancestors. With each passing generation, the final ancestor would be taken out of the sacrificial system—at which point the ancestor would revert to being a ghost:

> Therefore the king erected seven ancestral temples, with an altar and level area for each. They were called: the temple for the father, the temple for the grandfather, the temple for the great-grandfather, the temple for the great-great grandfather, and the temple for the highest ancestor. At each he sacrificed monthly. The ancestral temples for the distant [ancestors] consisted of two tablets; sacrifices were offered seasonally, and then stopped. When they removed each tablet, they placed it at the altar; when they removed it from the altar, they placed it at the level area. For the altar and level area, when there was a prayer at them,

> they made sacrifices. If there was no prayer, they stopped. When it was removed from the level area, they were named "ghosts." (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.5)

In contrast to the king's seven ancestral temples, the lords were allowed only five ancestral temples. As the text elaborates, the dead after the fifth generation were again termed "ghosts." Continuing down the hierarchy, the nobles were allowed three, the officers two, and the petty officers one. The lowest strata of society were not allowed to sacrifice to the dead at all: "The lower offices and commoners got no ancestral temples; their dead were called 'ghosts' " (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.5).

The authors go on to elaborate the other dead humans who were to receive sacrifices as well, including figures who had done great services for humanity (and would therefore continue to receive sacrifices even after they were past the generational level at which such sacrifices would be maintained in the ancestral cult) and particular figures who died without descendants. Throughout, the concern of the authors is to emphasize the proper hierarchy set up by the sages for who should be allowed to perform which set of sacrifices.

The implication of the text is that these sacrifices were set up according to the dictates of a proper social hierarchy. Thus, if we simply return to following the sacrifices established by the ancient sages, we would also return to following a proper social hierarchy that should be underlying our state, economy, and family.

So what does the text argue? To begin with, the claim is clearly not that sacrifices were set up under divine guidelines. Indeed, they were not set up in response to the actions of divine powers (whether those be spirits or ancestors) at all. On the contrary, the argument is simply that there were certain elements in the cosmos (including everything from mountains to dead humans) that had features relevant to living humans. These elements themselves would appear to have been entirely indifferent to humans; their relevance was simply from the point of view of the living. It was the sages who decided to set up a sacrificial system in which certain powers in the natural world would be termed spirits and dead humans would be termed ancestors, and both would be sacrificed to accordingly. In other words, not only were sacrifices set up by humans for humans, but even the spirits and ancestors themselves were an *effect*, not a cause, of human ritual.

And the hierarchy of the sacrificial system was again a product of nothing other than what was deemed by human sages to be proper for humans. No argument is made, for example, that there is anything inherent in the powers of the cosmos that would determine whether a king or a lord would be the more appropriate sacrificer for a given spirit; the distinctions made between what spirits a ruler versus a lord should be allowed to sacrifice to were simply based upon the hierarchy deemed necessary for humans. Similarly, the text makes no claim that royal ancestors are inherently better than, or longer-lasting than those of lesser nobles; the argument of how

many ancestors a king as opposed to a lord or an officer should be allowed to sacrifice to was again simply made on the basis of the hierarchy deemed proper for humans.

The implication of this is that, if there were no humans defining natural powers as spirits and sacrificing to them, and if there were no humans defining particular dead humans as ancestors and sacrificing to them, then those spirits and ancestors, and the entire hierarchy that should exist amongst them, would not exist. There would simply be dead humans, mountains with resources, and the like. The text is thus explicitly arguing that the divine, at least in the ways it is defined (as spirits and ancestors) and in the hierarchy that we accept in our sacrifices, is a product of human ritual.

What are the implications of such a view? Radcliffe-Brown famously tried to read arguments like these as being precursors to functionalist analysis. Quoting from other chapters of the *Liji* as well as the *Xunzi* (which give arguments very similar to the ones we have been discussing), Radcliffe-Brown argues,

> There is no doubt that in China, as elsewhere, it was thought that many or all of the religious rites were efficacious in the sense of averting evils and bringing blessings. It was believed that the seasons would not follow one another in due order unless the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, performed the established rites at the appropriate times. Even under the Republic a reluctant magistrate of a *hsien* may be compelled by public opinion to take the leading part in a ceremony to bring rain. But there developed among the scholars an attitude which might perhaps be called rationalistic or agnostic. For the most part the question of the efficacy of rites was not considered. What was thought important was the social function of the rites, i.e. their effects in producing and maintaining an orderly human society. (Radcliffe-Brown 1965, 158)

Radcliffe-Brown continues:

> The view taken by this school of ancient philosophers was that religious rites have important social functions which are independent of any beliefs that may be held as to the efficacy of the rites. The rites give regulated expression to certain human feelings and sentiments and so kept these sentiments alive and active. In turn it was these sentiments which, by their control of or influence on the conduct of individuals, made possible the existence and continuance of an orderly social life. (Radcliffe-Brown 1965, 160)

Radcliffe-Brown thus wants to argue that the views under discussion oppose any belief in the efficacy of the rites and instead emphasize a rational, agnostic, and functional understanding of ritual—precisely like the view of ritual that Radcliffe-Brown himself was developing.

For Radcliffe-Brown, then, the central distinction is between the participants, who actually believe in the efficacy of the rites, and the analyst, who sees ritual in purely functional terms rather than belief. The analyst, in other words, unmasks the beliefs concerning the rituals that the participants possess. For Radcliffe-Brown, the authors of these chapters would be in the same position as a contemporary social scientist: unmasking the superstitious beliefs of the people.

I would disagree with Radcliffe-Brown—both in his reading of the Chinese material and in his theoretical views on ritual. I turn first to the former issue, beginning with the notion of unmasking the beliefs of the people. The *Liji* is a text that would later be canonized as one of the Five Classics and would ultimately become a standard text in the education curriculum for all educated people in China. Moreover, as alluded to earlier, it would become the standard of ritual practice for the elites in medieval China, and for the populace as a whole beginning in the late imperial period. This is hardly an unmasking of participants' belief: it is a prescription for the practice of ritual, and one that proved to be extraordinarily successful.

Clearly there is something else going on here. The first step in unpacking the argument is to look at what the text is reacting against. According to Radcliffe-Brown, texts like the one under discussion give a proper functionalist response to the prevailing ritual practices of the day. As Radcliffe-Brown sees it, those prevailing practices were based upon a belief in the efficacy of the rites in bringing blessings, averting evil, and the like—a belief that texts like the *Liji* and *Xunzi* have rejected. I suspect that such an interpretation will need to be re-thought.

The chapter in question calls for a return to the forms of sacrifice prevalent during the Bronze Age. Although the authors were of course reinterpreting certain elements of those rituals, they also were quite faithful to the other elements. The prevailing view of ritual practice during the Bronze Age was indeed based upon the efficacy of ritual, but that efficacy was based upon the notion that ritual could, in a sense, humanize the divine world—it could transform capricious and potentially antagonistic divine forces into anthropomorphic deities that would (hopefully) act as ancestors on behalf of humanity. As David Keightley has argued, Shang sacrificial practice was aimed at "making ancestors" (Keightley 2004). The goal was thus to transform (as much as possible, anyway) the divine powers into an ancestral hierarchy that would hopefully function in support of the living. As I argued elsewhere:

> The Shang sacrificial system was an attempt to domesticate these highly agonistic forces and place them within a hierarchy manipulable for the sake of human interests. . . . [S]acrificial practice in the Shang was aimed at a radical transformation of the divine world, a transformation undertaken precisely so that humanity could appropriate and domesticate nature for its purposes. Such an attempt to transform both

> the divine and natural worlds does indeed involve an enormous investment in sacrificial action, but that investment emerged not from an assumption of harmonious collaboration between man and god; it emerged out of a sense of radical discontinuity and lack of harmony. (Puett 2002, 78)

The efficacy invoked in these practices is of a very particular type: the attempt to transform the divine world into a hierarchy modeled on the human realm, and thus to create a divine pantheon that would hopefully act on behalf of humanity:

> The concern, in short, was to transform a capricious and potentially antagonistic spirit world into a hierarchical pantheon of ordered genealogical descent interested in its living descendants' welfare. (Puett 2002, 198)

If we compare practices of this sort with the text we have been discussing, one is at first struck with a crucial similarity. In both, the concern is to start with the hierarchy of the living and to create a world of divine powers based upon that same hierarchy. The basic difference between these practices and the position we have seen in the "Ji fa" is that the latter takes out the view that the divine forces are capricious. For the authors of the "Ji fa," the cosmos is perhaps best described as indifferent: things exist, and sacrifices serve to define those things into a hierarchy serviceable for humanity. Gone, in other words, is the claim that the divine powers are potentially antagonistic to humans and in need of transformation through the sacrificial act. But the notion that the spirits and ancestors are the product, not the cause, of ritual is still very much in place. The divine is placed into and defined by a hierarchy useful for humanity. And also very much in place is the notion that human ritual is the source of order—or at least of the order that is useful for humans: were it not for these sacrifices, the hierarchy and order necessary for a proper human appropriation of the natural world would not exist.

But, at least as importantly, this is a view of ritual that operates much the same regardless of what the participants believe pre-exists the sacrifices. In other words, whether the participants believe it is an indifferent cosmos of natural forces or a cosmos filled with potentially antagonistic forces that really will be eating the sacrifices is irrelevant. Some participants may believe that capricious divine powers are really being transformed into benign ancestors, whereas others may not. Either way, the common belief across the board would be that it is the act of performing sacrifices that creates a proper hierarchy of ancestors, divinities, and living humans. Indeed, the chapters of the *Liji* themselves go back and forth on this issue: some chapters present the cosmos as being populated by natural forces, others present is as being governed by capricious spirits. As an example of the

latter, one can turn to the "Biao ji" 表記 chapter:

> The Master said, "As for the sacrificial victims, ritual, and music being properly arranged and flourishing, this is the means by which there is no harm from the ghosts and spirits and no resentment from the hundred families." (*Liji*, "Biao ji," ICS, 151.33.27)

Here, one of the goals of the rituals is to pacify the ghosts and spirits. But what is interesting is that, although the vision of whether the cosmos is populated by natural forces or capricious spirits, the logic of sacrifice throughout the *Liji* is remarkably consistent: regardless of what existed before the sacrifices, the consequence of sacrifices is the creation of a hierarchy of ancestral and divine forces defined by living humans. Belief is crucial here, and belief in the efficacy of the rites is crucial as well. But the belief in what pre-existed the rituals is not the belief that is relevant. What is relevant is the belief that ritual is a product of humans: human sages created it, and the order of divine powers is thus a result of that creation.

If such a claim concerning the efficacy of rituals is not an unmasking of superstitious beliefs, then it will be necessary for us to explore in further depth the logic of sacrifice as articulated in these chapters. As we will see, many of the specific rituals will vary over the chapters, but a consistent logic will emerge. And it is one that is very telling for understanding aspects of sacrificial practice in early China.

The Temple and the Tomb

Let us turn to an alternate deployment of the terms "ghost" (*gui* 鬼) and "spirit" (*shen* 神), placed in an alternate narrative of the origin of sacrifice. The "Ji yi" 祭義 chapter includes a dialogue between Zai Wo and Confucius. Zai Wo begins by asking what ghosts and spirits are, and Confucius provides a lengthy explanation.

> Zai Wo said: "I have heard the names 'ghosts' and 'spirits,' but I do not know what they mean."
>
> The Master said: "*Qi* is the flourishing of spirit; the earthly soul (*po* 魄) is the flourishing of the ghost. Combining the ghost and the spirit is the highest teaching." (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.24)

Confucius immediately defines ghosts and spirits as consisting of substances existing in a living human being: spirit consists of *qi*, and ghosts are made up of the earthly soul. At death, the two will naturally separate, and the goal of ritual is therefore to combine them again, although this time not in a human body. The explanation continues:

> Everything that is born will die. When one dies, one returns to the ground. This was called the "ghost." The bones and flesh wither below;

> hidden, they become the earth of the fields. Their *qi* is sent out above; it becomes radiant brightness. According with the essence of things, instituting the pivot of action, [the sages] clearly named "ghosts" and "spirits," taking them as a pattern for the black-haired people. The populace was thereby awed, and the myriad people thereby submitted. (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.25–27)

When a person dies, the material remains return to the earth, while the *qi* floats upward. If these natural processes are left alone, the remains of humans thus become part of the heavens and the earth, unrelated to humanity. Instead of allowing this to occur, the remains were instead termed "ghosts" and "spirits" respectively. Such a nomenclature, it was hoped, would help bring about the submission of the populace.

The naming of ghosts and spirits, however, was still not sufficient to create the society the sages desired, so the sages went on to create temples and ancestral halls:

> The sages took this as still insufficient, so they constructed dwellings and houses, and set up temples and ancestral halls. They thereby differentiated closer and more distant kinship, and closer and farther removed in terms of descent. [The sages] taught the people to turn to the past and look back to the beginning, no longer forgetting where they came from. The populace submitted to this and therefore obeyed with greater urgency. (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.28)

The goal of creating temples and ancestral halls was to teach the people to remember the past. And for much the same reason, the sages went on to create sacrifices:

> When these two ends were established, they responded with two rituals. They set up the morning service, burning fat and manifesting it with the radiance of [burning] southernwood. They thereby responded to the *qi*. This taught the populace to return to the beginning. They offered millet and rice, and served liver, lungs, head, and heart, presenting them and separating them into two bowls, and supplementing them with sacrificial wine. They thereby respond to the earthly soul (*po*). This taught the people to love one another, and taught superiors and inferiors to utilize their dispositions (*qing* 情).[5] This was the utmost of ritual. (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.29)

The sages established two separate sacrifices for the substances that they had termed "spirits" and "ghosts." For the former, they burned fat, allowing the smoke to rise up to the *qi* that had floated upward after the death of the person in question. By doing so, they focused the attention of the ritual participants on the past. Although the link here is not spelled out, it is presumably the same issues as we noted in the "Ji fa" chapter: the spirits are arranged in

a lineage hierarchy through the ancestral temples, so sacrifices to the spirits will focus attention on the ancestral line. The ghosts, on the contrary, are offered a full meal of delicacies. The goal of the ritual meal is to teach the participants a love for their kin.

> The gentleman returns to antiquity and looks back to the beginning. He does not forget where he came from. He therefore directs his reverence, extends his dispositions, and exhausts himself in attending to affairs. He thereby responds to his kin and does not dare not to exert himself to the utmost. (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.30)

Thus, the remains of humans, instead of becoming simply a part of the heavens and earth—unrelated to living humans—are instead brought into a sacrificial cult that links them with living humans.

If this is true for humans in general, then there is a specific implication for the ruler. Instead of defining elements in the heavens as an ancestor, the ruler—as the Son of Heaven—defined Heaven itself as his father and sacrificed to it accordingly:

> Therefore, in ancient times, the Son of Heaven maintained a thousand *mou* of fields; in a cap with red tails, he personally held the plough. The lords of the states maintained a hundred *mou* of fields; in caps with green tails, they personally held the ploughs. They thereby served Heaven, Earth, the mountains, streams, gods of the soil and grain, and the earliest forefathers. They thereby made sweet wine, cream, and arrayed vessels. They therefore took hold of them. This was the extremity of reverence. (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 126.25.31)

For the king, the sacrifices to powers in the heavens and earth are in fact sacrifices to Heaven and Earth themselves, which the ruler, as Son of Heaven, presents as his ancestors. As is stated elsewhere in the chapter: "Only the sage is able to sacrifice to god (*di*) and the filial son is able to sacrifice to his parents" (*Liji*, "Ji yi," ICS, 124. 25.6). This is undoubtedly the same logic that underlies the reference to the royal sacrifices of old in the "Ji fa":

> With a roasted-meat burnt offering on the great altar, they sacrificed to Heaven; with a buried offering on the great mound, they sacrificed to Earth. (*Liji*, "Ji fa," ICS, 122.24.2)

The goal of the sacrifices, therefore, was, as Confucius is reported to say at the beginning of the dialogue, to combine the elements of the heavens and of the earth with living humans. The opening creations of sacrifices, therefore, were aimed at taking those elements of dead humans that went to the ground and floated into the heavens, calling them "ghosts" and "spirits" respectively, and building a sacrificial practice around them. The latter became the basis of a lineage cult, and the former became the basis of a cult

to individual deceased figures. The two cults thus created proper lineage relations and familial dispositions among the living, and then defined the ruler as the Son of Heaven.

Just as the "Ji fa" chapter was building upon elements of earlier sacrificial practice to develop its arguments, the same is certainly true for the "Ji yi" chapter. The distinction between sacrifices at the temple and tomb was crucial in ancestral sacrifices in early China.[6] But the goal of such sacrifices was somewhat different.

Sacrifices at the temple were indeed oriented toward creating a defined ancestral line, but sacrifices at the tomb were concerned much more with keeping the remains of the dead away from the living. Thus, the occupant of the tomb would be buried with objects that he enjoyed while alive—presumably to keep the occupant in the tomb happy. As Anna Seidel has demonstrated, the souls in the tombs would even be called upon not to return to the living (Seidel 1987). In short, the goal was to keep the soul removed from the world of living humans. There is also some evidence that there were hopes of the soul achieving a continued life or rebirth of sorts in a paradise (Loewe 1979; Seidel 1982).

The "Ji yi" chapter, however, shows no concern with any of this. While the discussion of temple sacrifices seems quite similar to actual sacrificial practice, the tomb sacrifices are quite distinct. Absent in the chapter is any concern with keeping the soul removed, or with the afterlife of the soul. Instead, the concern is with connecting the remains in the earth, along with those in the heavens, to the genealogical lines of the living—just as the ruler does at a higher level in connecting Heaven, Earth, and man.

Here again, then, we see a chapter building upon sacrificial practice, but doing so in order to make an argument for sacrifice as a means of creating a sense of genealogical continuity amongst otherwise disparate phenomena.

Feeding the Corpse

The mechanism by which offering food creates this social hierarchy is laid out in the "Ji tong" 祭統 chapter. One of the keys is that, when the deceased is to be offered sacrifice, the grandson serves as the impersonator of the deceased.[7] This means that the son of the ruler acts as the ruler's dead father, and that the ruler thus serves his son as he would serve his father:

> Now, according to the way of sacrificing, the grandson acted as the impersonator of the king's father. He who was made to act as the impersonator was the son of he who made the sacrifice. The father faced north and served him. By means of this, he made clear the way of a son serving his father. This is the relation of father and son. (*Liji*, "Ji tong," ICS, 131.26.14)

The serving of the father by the ruler is also an occasion to inculcate within the son proper hierarchical values. The father places himself in a subservient

position vis-à-vis his dead father, whom he thus presents as his ruler. During this ritual moment, the son, by serving as the impersonator of the grandfather, becomes the ruler of his father, and thus learns from his father the proper form of subservience to an elder.

And here again we see an overt emphasis in the text on marking off this ritual moment from mundane reality:

> The ruler met the victim but did not meet the impersonator. This avoided impropriety. When the impersonator was outside the gates of the temple, then he was seen as a subject; when he was inside the temple, then he was fully the ruler. When the ruler was outside the gates of the temple, he was seen as the ruler; when he entered the gates of the temple, he was fully the subject, fully the son. Therefore by not going outside, he made clear the propriety of ruler and subject. (*Liji*, "Ji tong," ICS, 131.26.13)

The ruler thus symbolically gives himself up to his deceased father, and then eats the leftovers after the ancestor has eaten. He thereby presents his power as an inheritance from his father. By having the son incarnate the grandfather, the son can be said to have the values of feeding the ancestor inculcated within him. But the reverse, of course, is equally true: the ritual plays out the fact that the ancestor is just a child, needing the food given by the father in order to survive. The real power, therefore, lies in the sacrificer, not in the recipient of the sacrifice: even if the overt posture of the ritual is the submission of the sacrificer to the ancestor (i.e., the father to the ancestor), the consequence of the ritual act is that the sacrificer is the one empowered by the sacrifice.

And for the ruler, this is taken to a higher extreme. We saw in the "Ji yi" chapter how the sacrificial logic that defined elements of the heavens and earth in ancestral and familial terms allowed the ruler to define himself as the Son of Heaven itself. The "Ji tong" chapter makes a comparable move.

> In all cases, as for what Heaven generates and Earth grows, everything that could be offered was included, with the altars exhausting all things. Externally exhausting all things and internally exhausting one's will: this is the mind of sacrificing. Therefore, the Son of Heaven personally ploughs the southern suburbs so as to fill the arrayed vessels. (*Liji*, "Ji tong," ICS, 130.26.5)

If the sacrificer defines himself as the inheritor of what the ancestor had given him, then the ruler presents himself as the son of Heaven.

And the chapter works out the implications in the other way as well: if the ruler, after sacrifice, makes himself into the Son of Heaven, he also, by the same logic, makes himself into the father and mother of the people. The consequence of this is that all of the lower generations in the realm (all of the "sons and grandsons") come to regard the ruler as the father and mother

of the people and grant him full reverence:

> Therefore, if his power is flourishing, his intent will be deep. If his intent is deep, his propriety will be displayed. If his propriety is displayed, his sacrifices will be reverent. If his sacrifices are reverent, then none of the sons and grandsons within the borders will dare be irreverent. . . . If his power is slight his intent will be light, if he has doubts about his propriety, then, when seeking to sacrifice, he will not be able to be reverent when it is necessary to be so. If he is not reverent when sacrificing, how can he be taken as the father and mother of the people? (*Liji*, "Ji tong," ICS, 133.26.22)

As long as the ruler is reverent when undertaking the sacrifices, those within his realm will be reverent as well and identify the ruler as their father and mother. The ruler is both the Son of Heaven and the father and mother of the people—not because, biologically, Heaven gave birth to the ruler or the ruler gave birth to the people, but because the logic of sacrifice creates these new relationships.

Making the Cosmos into a Family

Thus far, we traced how various chapters in the *Liji* have utilized and reinterpreted aspects of sacrificial practice to argue how the offering of food can build lines of genealogical descent among otherwise unrelated humans and phenomena. The full logic of such an argument is worked out in the "Li yun" 禮運 chapter. The chapter opens with a dialogue between Confucius and Yan Yan. Confucius is lamenting the decline that has occurred since antiquity, when what he calls the "Great Way" was in practice:

> In the practice of the Great Way, all under Heaven was public. They selected the talented and capable. They spoke sincerely and cultivated peace. Therefore, people did not only treat their own kin as kin, and did not only treat their own sons as sons. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 59.9.1)

In contrast, the contemporary period had lost this greatness:

> Now, the Great Way has become obscure. All under Heaven is [divided into] families. Each treats only its own kin as kin, only their own sons as sons. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 59.9.1)

Confucius goes on to explain how people of the day are selfish, concerned only with their own enrichment and empowerment. The basic distinction with which the authors open the chapter is thus between a world in which people think of only themselves and their families, versus a Great Way in which kinship relations are not restricted to one's own kin.

Yan Yan then inquires as to how the Great Way was achieved in antiquity, and Confucius explains that it was developed through the creations of the sages. And food was the key:

> Now, when rituals were first started, they began with drinking and eating. They roasted millet and slices of pork.[8] They hollowed out the ground to hold liquids and drank with their hands; they used straw drumsticks and earthen drums. Even so, they were able to direct their reverence to the ghosts and spirits. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 60.9.4)

The first rituals were based upon drinking and eating, and, despite their primitive state, they still allowed humans to direct reverence to the ghosts and spirits. But it was not until the sages invented fire, and therefore cooking, that the rituals fully became what they needed to be:

> In ancient times, the former kings did not yet have dwellings and houses. In the winter they lived in caves, in the summer in nests. They did not yet know the transformations of fire. They ate the fruits of grasses and trees, and the meat of birds and animals. They drank their blood and ate their flesh and hides. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 60.9.5)

The narrative continues:

> The later sages arose. Only then were they able to utilize the advantages of fire. They worked metals and pulled clay, and they thereby made towers and houses with windows and doors. They thereby baked, roasted, boiled, and broiled. They made sweet wine and gruel. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 60.9.6)

Once the techniques of cooking were created, the people were able to practice proper rituals to nourish the living and divine alike: "They thereby nourished the living and sent off the dead, and thereby served the ghosts, spirits, and High God" (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 60.9.6). In short, it was cooking that allowed humans to nourish their own and serve the divine powers: only by transforming the raw into cooked were humans able to produce the Great Way.

Confucius then describes how the rituals work. The key is that the rituals allow the ruler to extend kin relations to all of his people and to the divine powers as well. To begin with, as Confucius emphasizes, the ruler makes himself the "Son of Heaven" by sacrificing to Heaven and Earth: "Therefore the Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, the lords of the states sacrifice to the altars of the land and grain" (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 61.9.10). Only the ruler can sacrifice to Heaven and Earth, for only he is allowed to set up kinship relations with these powers. And this is done, Confucius explains directly, in order to gain control of the realm: "Thus, the sage forms a triad with Heaven and Earth and connects with the ghosts and spirits so as to

control his rule" (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 61.9.18). The way this works is that Heaven and Earth and the people are all worked into kinship relations:

> Therefore, Heaven generates the seasons and the Earth generates materials. As for humans, fathers generate and teachers teach them. As for these four, the ruler thereby corrects and utilizes them. Thus, the ruler stands on the ground without error. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 61.9.18)

Heaven and Earth are natural processes, generating seasons and materials respectively, while human relations include those of father and teacher. The ruler combines these, presenting Heaven as father and teacher, and presenting himself as father and teacher of the people.

Accordingly, the ruler places himself in a supreme position. Even though he claims to take care of the people, they are in fact serving him:

> Thus, the ruler is he who is brightened; it is not that he brightens others. The ruler is he who is nourished; it is not that he nourishes others. The ruler is he is who served; it is not that he serves others. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 61.9.19)

This is the same point emphasized in the "Ji tong": the ruler does not feed his underlings; instead, the food they receive from the ruler is symbolically presented as simply that leftover by the ruler, just as the portion the ruler eats is that leftover by the ancestor.

The consequence of this is that all under Heaven is forged into a single family. But it is done so covertly, by playing upon the dispositions, experiences, and sense of propriety that the people have within their own families:

> Therefore, as for the sage bearing to take all under Heaven as one family and take the central states as one person, it is not something done overtly. He necessarily knows their dispositions, opens up their sense of propriety, clarifies what they feel to be advantageous, and apprehends what they feel to be calamitous. Only then is he capable of enacting it. (*Liji*, "Li yun," ICS, 62.9.22)

In other words, the ruler utilizes the basic dispositions of humans and through rituals creates a situation where everyone serves him: all of the world is one family, with the ruler himself as the Son of Heaven and the father and mother of the people, and all of the central states as a single person, embodied by himself.

The full argument of the chapter thus recapitulates the opening lines. The period of degeneration is one in which the rituals are not working—a world in which all under Heaven is divided into families that simply operate for themselves. After the invention of rituals by the sages, the entire state and cosmos is perceived to be a single family, with the ruler as the Son of Heaven and the father of the people.

Reverse Descent

The argument running through these chapters is that, through sacrifice, the sacrificer is able to create lines of descent that are clearly recognized as not being biologically based. The ancestral lines—including dead humans and elements of the larger cosmos—are thus defined by the living through the acts of offering food in sacrifice. And this also means, of course, that the hierarchy of ancestors changes as the hierarchy of the living changes. The logic of this is clear when we turn to the founding ruler of a dynasty. There is no claim that, for example, a given ruler was in fact born of Heaven rather than of human parents, or that the lineage of a given ruling dynasty has a closer biological link to Heaven than other lineages. On the contrary, the relations are always defined ex post facto—a ruler takes power and only then, through sacrifice, does he define his ancestral lineage as royal and does he define Heaven as his father. The authors thus describe the sacrifices after the Zhou conquest:

> Muye was the great accomplishment of King Wu. After this accomplishment, he withdrew, made a burnt offering to the Highest God, prayed to the Earth Altar, and established the offering of libations at the house of Mu. . . . He retrospectively gave the title of king to Taiwang Danfu, King Jili, and King Wen Zhang. (*Liji*, "Da zhuan" ICS, 91.16.1)

Here we see a moment where the logic of the living defining the ancestral line played out at the highest political level. When King Wu defeated the Shang armies at Muye, he became the new ruler of all under Heaven. He thus gained the authority to sacrifice to the highest god (otherwise called Heaven), and his ancestors retrospectively were granted the royal title as well. Again, it is the actions of the living that define the ancestral hierarchy.

And what about the problem that, after these sacrifices, a ruler would have, in a sense, two fathers—a human father and Heaven? The text addresses this as well in a discussion of the nature of victims in Zhou sacrifice:

> If the oxen for the god (*di*) is not felicitous, it is taken as the oxen for Hou Ji. The oxen for the god must stay in a pen for three months; the oxen for Hou Ji must simply be complete. This is the means to distinguish serving the spirits of Heaven and the ghosts of man. The root of the myriad things lies in Heaven, the root of humans lies in ancestors. This is why one becomes a counterpart to the god on high. (*Liji*, "Jiao te sheng," ICS, 71.11.20)

Heaven is the root of the natural world, while ancestors are the root of humanity. For the Zhou clan, the highest ancestor was Hou Ji. According to the text, the Zhou ruler offered oxen to both Heaven (the god on high) and Hou Ji. The difference is that the oxen to be given to Heaven would be penned for

three months—a ritual separation that would mark it as distinct from the oxen to be offered to human ghosts. But the key is that the ruler is the sacrificer both to the human ghost deemed the ancestral founder and to Heaven. As such, he bridges the divide between them, making himself the descendant of both and thereby becoming a counterpart to Heaven. He is, therefore, both the Son of Heaven and the descendant of the defined ancestral line.

The Logic of Sacrifice in the *Liji*

The logic throughout these chapters is consistent. Without the sacrifices invented by human sages, the cosmos is at least indifferent, and perhaps governed by capricious spirits, and humans regard only members of their biological families as objects of concern. When people die, the energies that kept them alive float up to the heavens, and their souls settle in the earth—neither having a relationship with the living again. In short, the world without human sacrifice is one of discontinuity—families separated from others, humans separated from the rest of the cosmos, the living separated from the dead.

The sages of the past created sacrifices to change this. The basic goal of these sacrificial practices was to create a world of continuity in which all significant aspects of the larger cosmos—natural phenomena, spirits, and dissipated elements of dead humans—as well as living humans would be linked through hierarchical lines defined by the living ruler. Thus, the ruler would be defined as both the Son of Heaven and the father and mother of the people. And dead humans would be defined as ancestors to those alive, and the resulting lineages would be arranged hierarchically (the more important lineages being granted more ancestors), and all would be encompassed by the ruling lineage. In short, sacrifice created a world of continuity in which all of humanity and all of the cosmos were linked into ancestral lines defined by the living ruler.

To return again to a statement from the "Biao ji" quoted earlier:

> The Master said, "As for the sacrificial victims, ritual, and music being properly arranged and flourishing, this is the means by which there is no harm from the ghosts and spirits and no resentment from the hundred families." (*Liji*, "Biao ji," ICS, 151.33.27)

Through sacrifices, the divine world and the hundred families are pacified, and the pacification is done even without creating resentment. The ideal is a set of sacrificial practices that would form the entire cosmos into a family of continuity, linking all of the disparate biological families, ghosts, and spirits into a single line of created descent.

The History of Sacrifice

So how are we to account for this argument concerning sacrifice? It is important to rule out immediately an explanation that would see such

a view as representing an assumption in the early period. Although the views outlined here would ultimately become highly influential, they were in the early period only one position among many.

To begin with, one should point out that the fundamental view here of sacrifice as having been invented by humans in order to create a hierarchy in the cosmic realm was hardly an accepted position across the board in the early period. The early Mohists, for example, famously argued the precise opposite, claiming that Heaven had created the hierarchy of the cosmos and the hierarchy among humans (Puett 2001, 51–56; Puett 2002, 101–04).

However, as we have seen repeatedly, the text is indeed building upon earlier sacrificial practice. We have already seen how the general framework of using sacrifice to transform the divine world into a pantheon of genealogical continuity is highly reminiscent of Shang and Western Zhou practice, and the authors of particular chapters are also building upon the practice of using the grandson as a personator for the deceased grandfather, and of distinguishing between sacrifices at the temple and the tomb. The claim of these texts to be calling for a return to Bronze Age practices is not completely false, although the practices were, of course, reinterpreted. So the crucial issue for us is to place this appropriation of earlier sacrificial practice into an historical context.

The chapters under consideration here were written in the Warring States and early Han. As seen, they argue for a return to a feudalistic form of governance and social hierarchy, presumably in opposition to the centralized forms of statecraft that were becoming increasingly dominant over this period.[9] The authors make this argument through a description of a sacrificial system they claim was created by the ancient sages and should now be instituted again. By the latter part of the Western Han, several figures at court began supporting the arguments of the *Liji* in opposition to the forms of divine emperorship and imperial statecraft that had been developed during the reign of the First Emperor of Qin and consolidated during that of Emperor Wu of the Han.[10] The sacrificial system put in place under Emperor Wu involved a divinization of the ruler, resulting in his ultimate ascension, and a strong symbolic claim for the personal control that the emperor should exercise over all sacrificial sites and the territories in which they were found. The *Liji* was strongly pushed by Han *ru* who opposed such a claim of divine emperorship and the forms of extreme centralized authority that it implied. At the end of the Western Han dynasty, when the empire was growing progressively weak because of imperial overreach, supporters of the *Liji* succeeded in convincing the imperial court to reject the sacrificial system that had been in place since the reign of Emperor Wu and replace it with one based upon the *Liji*. The sacrificial practices outlined in the *Liji* thereafter grew in importance over the course of the Eastern Han.

Ultimately, the sacrificial practices outlined in the *Liji* would prove to be a highly effective mode of organizing an empire—far more effective than the forms of divine emperorship emphasized in the Qin and early Han. Time and again throughout Chinese history, states would return to the *Liji*

system—most recently in the late imperial period. Tellingly, the system was appealed to precisely during those periods when centralized authority proved incapable of controlling local areas. In such situations, the sacrificial system outlined here became highly successful.

Conclusion

The goal of sacrifice in the *Liji* chapters is to transform all the participants through the offering of food. In terms of the recipients of sacrifice, ghosts are transformed into ancestors, capricious spirits and natural forces are transformed into hierarchically proper spirits, disparate biological families are transformed into a single created family. Similarly, the sacrificer is then transformed by his new relationship to these transformed recipients of the sacrifice: he gains a proper reverence for the ancestors, familial feelings toward biologically unrelated people, and the like. If the sacrificer is the ruler, his position of power is greatly enhanced, as he comes to be situated in the crucial position between humanity and the world of ancestral and divine powers—he comes to be seen as the father and mother of the people as well as the Son of Heaven. But note that he is not changed through the sacrifice in the sense of being released of his sins, or of being transformed into a divine being. He is rather changed in the sense of gaining familial feelings toward otherwise disparate phenomena (capricious spirits, phenomena in nature, biologically unrelated humans, and the remains of dead humans), and the recipients of his offerings are hopefully also transformed and thus come to view him in terms of these links of genealogical continuity as well.

In short, the exchange of food creates a new arrangement of the social, political, and cosmic worlds. Indeed, the "Li yun" chapter places the invention of cooking through fire as the key innovation that allowed humans to set up this system. Humans, by learning to cook, were able to set up a sacrificial system that humanized the world and transformed disparate phenomena into a hierarchy defined for human purposes.

Given the full argument of the material, Radcliffe-Brown's attempt to read texts like these as functionalist to some extent misses the point. The text is not unmasking ritual as, in fact (i.e., against the beliefs of participants) functioning to maintain social cohesion. It is rather arguing for a notion of sacrifice as having a fundamental transformative efficacy. And the very things that make such an argument not quite fit the interpretation Radcliffe-Brown gives it also make it interesting. With a functionalist analysis of ritual—particularly religious ritual, one is always involved in unmasking a given set of practices as being in fact about something other than what the tradition itself claims. And here we have an instance where that unmasking is indeed incorrect: the text is making an argument for a constructionist vision of ritual, and it is doing so precisely by appealing to, not unmasking, beliefs in the efficacy of sacrificial practice. The act of sacrifice here creates a new world—a world that is clearly recognized as being a

human creation, not a naturally or biologically given reality. Sacrifice is presented as a human construction, and the resulting order of the social and cosmic realms is as well.

Notes

1. See Jordan (1972); Wolf (1974); Harrel (1974); Watson and Rawski (1988); Weller (1987); and Sangren (1987). I would like to express my gratitude to Roel Sterckx for his invaluable comments on this paper.
2. See the pioneering works of Seidel (1982, 1987); von Falkenhausen (1994); Brashier (1996); and Rawson (1999, 2000).
3. My understanding of sacrifice in China has been aided immeasureably by the excellent analyses in Wilson (2002); Boileau (1998–99); Zito (1997); and Campany (1992).
4. *Liji*, "Ji fa," Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute of Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (hereafter cited as ICS), 123.24.9. My translations here and throughout have been aided greatly by those of James Legge (1885).
5. On the notion of *qing* in early China, see Puett (2004).
6. See the superb articles by Brashier (1996); Wu Hung (1988); and Yu Ying-Shih (1987).
7. Here too, the authors are building upon earlier sacrificial practices. See in particular Carr (1985).
8. Presumably from natural fires, since, as we see shortly, the domesticated use of fire had yet to be invented.
9. For an excellent discussion of the text, see Nylan (2001).
10. Here I summarize an argument developed in full in Puett (2002). For the late Western Han ritual reform in particular, see Loewe (1974) and Kern (2001). On the Han *ru*, see Nylan (1997, 1999).

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CHAPTER FIVE

Eating Better than Gods and Ancestors

Robert F. Campany

In late classical and early medieval China, practitioners developed dietary regimens that claimed to make them transcendents (*xian* 仙)—deathless, superhuman beings.[1] The question I wish to explore is simple, though the answer is not: it concerns not so much what seekers of transcendence ate (or were represented as eating) but what they did not eat; more, it concerns what their diet meant.

A culinary choice—especially when prescribed by a scripture or sanctioned by a tradition—may carry two kinds of meanings and functions. Those I call *internalist* explicitly explain them in terms of the intrinsic benefits of the foodstuffs they feature or the preparations they prescribe. Often such explanation invokes a larger theory, cosmology, or myth, maybe as simple as "We eat X because X makes us live long." *Externalist* meanings or functions pertain to dietary choices that have the effect, whether by intention or not, of associating eaters with certain clusters of values and dissociating them from others. Here, culinary regimes amount to statements about a wide range of other matters (and other groups of eaters), whatever might be the intrinsic benefits claimed. Externalist meanings are inherently associative or contrastive, even if only implicitly: "We eat X, which is not Y, which those other people eat" (contrastive or dissociative) or "We eat X, which is what beings of class Z, too, eat" (associative). While they are rarely socially neutral, internalist meanings may or may not claim a hierarchy of eaters; externalist ones almost always do: "We who eat X are thereby in a position superior (in some respect) to those others who eat Y."

My sensitivity to the externalist meanings of culinary choices is partly inspired by the work of Michael Puett, who has shown how choices made in a text acquire new significance when viewed, not in isolation, but as alternatives to competing ideas; they come to be seen not simply as assertions made in a vacuum, or reports of assumptions internal to the author's own camp, but as arguments with interlocutors. To return to the culinary domain, a group's favoring of food A may have more to do with the sheer fact that A is not food B than it does with any intrinsic benefits claimed for A or any claimed inadequacies of B.

This view of cultures sees them as contestational fields upon which agents assert claims and attempt to persuade others. Ideas, traditions, and bundles of practices are not imagined as "evolving" or "chang[ing] glacially over time as the result of impersonal processes" (Lincoln 1999, 18) or solely according to their own internal, neutral logic. Nor are they understood as simply belonging to large bodies of impersonal, collective things like "mythology," "popular religion," or "Daoism" that essentially invent themselves (Campany 2003). Instead they are seen as claims advanced by particular agents against alternative positions and with significant stakes involved; they are "the sites of pointed and highly consequential semantic skirmishes fought between rival regimes of truth" (Lincoln 1999, 18) and of prestige. A culinary discipline is, among other things, a tactical deployment of taxonomies, and its contrast of higher with lower ways of eating is "not an idle play of categories but a social and political intervention" (Lincoln 1999, 118).

Although techniques such as those examined here have usually been labeled by modern scholars as "Daoist," I avoid this practice. I am averse to reifying religions, to "tradition holism," and to lumping together quite disparate things and asserting that they must somehow be organically related to one another, must share some essential "Daoist identity," merely by virtue of a common label. It is unclear how lumping disparate practices and attitudes into a singular "Daoism" helps us understand them. I wager that particular texts and practices are better explicated on the basis of the terms they present as well as in relation to the other practices and attitudes to which they constituted alternatives.

The Symbolic and Social Significance of Grains, Meats, Agriculture, and Sacrifice

First, two caveats. (1) The following is a mere sketch, not an attempt to exhaustively survey the views on the subjects broached. Each text cited crystallizes the views of a circle of authors and readers, but I will not assume that any of them is the "expression" of some unitary "mythological tradition" or "school" or "ism." Taken together, however, the texts selected represent a wide swath of viewpoints. (2) Each passage adduced below was also likely circulated as a response to some opposed view, yet it is impossible to do justice to each passage in its own argumentative setting here. I treat these passages as articulating some of the baseline views and practices to which cuisines of transcendence were crafted as alternatives.

The Consumption of Grains and the Cooking of Food as Key Marks of Civilization

In the "Royal Regulations" chapter of the *Liji* (Book of Rites), representing a Western Han or earlier viewpoint, we find the following discussion:

> The people of the five regions—those of the central kingdoms, the Rong, the Yi [and so on]—each had their several natures, which they

> could not be made to alter. Those of the east were called Yi; they wore their hair unbound and tattooed their bodies, and some of them ate their food without cooking it. [The people of] the south were called Man; they tattooed their foreheads and had their feet turned in toward each other, and some among them ate their food without cooking it. [The people of] the west were called Rong; they wore their hair unbound and wore skins, and some of them did not eat grain. [The people of] the north were called Di; they wore feathers and furs and lived in caves, and some of them did not eat grain.

The discussion ends by noting how, in ancient times, people were redistributed into walled towns and fields, "so that there was no unoccupied land and there were no people left wandering."[2]

K. C. Chang astutely notes that, in this passage, not cooking and not eating grains are both markers of barbarism, but are different markers. "One could eat grain but also eat raw meat or one could eat his meat cooked but eat no grain. Neither was fully Chinese. A Chinese by definition ate grain and cooked his meat" (Chang 1977, 42)—and, we might add, lived in a settled agricultural community. Unlike Chang, I read this passage as reflecting the views of its late Warring States or Han author-redactors, seeing it less as Zhou ethnographic description than as ideology wrapped in the guise of description, and its message, hardly unique to this text, is that eating grains (the products of organized agriculture), cooking, and living in settled communities are among the traits possessed by human beings par excellence. Anything less counts as not fully human and should be modified by the instructive interventions of the paradigmatically human people whose norms fill the book's pages.

Many texts relevant to our inquiry take the form of what Bruce Lincoln has termed sitiogonies (Lincoln 1986, 65), narratives of the nature and origin of food (from Greek *sitos* "food, bread, grain"—this term, like the analogous *gu* 穀 in Chinese, denotes both grain and grain-based staple foods in particular and, synecdochically, food in general).[3] Consider, for example, the poem "Sheng min" 生民 in the *Shijing* (Book of Odes), a text of Zhou origin (ca. 1000–600 BCE). The poem opens by asking how Jiang Yuan 姜嫄 gave birth to "the people." It recounts that, after making an offering and praying for a child, Jiang Yuan trod on the toe-print of Di (the sky god) and subsequently gave painless birth to Hou Ji or Lord Millet. For reasons unexplained, Hou Ji was thrice abandoned, but oxen and sheep, woodcutters, and birds successively rescued him. After the birds' departure he began to wail and crawl, and then, "so as to receive food for his mouth," he planted beans, hemp, wheat, gourds, and millet, and his crops flourished and fattened. With this produce he "created (or founded or commenced) the sacrifices." Then follows a second question: "What are they, our sacrifices?" The answer lists processes for the preparation of the grains and meats used, then describes the divine response: "As soon as the fragrance rises, Di on high is very pleased." The poem concludes by linking the textual present to this august

past: "Lord Millet founded the sacrifices, and without blemish or flaw they have been continued till now."[4] Much could be said of this text; I limit my comments to two:

(1) The very origin and continued existence of the Zhou people is bound by the invention of agriculture, and the invention of agriculture with sacrifice. Agriculture and sacrifice have the same originator, Lord Millet (named for what is both a chief agricultural product and a chief class of grains offered in sacrifice), and although he plants crops to feed himself, the first thing he does with the produce is "found the sacrifices." Agriculture and sacrifice link the Zhou people to Di in multiple ways, through repeated sacrificial ritual, through continuous sacred history, and through divine/human descent (Di is Hou Ji's divine father, and Hou Ji is the father of the Zhou people). Furthermore, Hou Ji's human mother gains procreative access to his divine father by means of sacrifice.

(2) The poem sets up a hierarchy of eaters and foods: the semi-divine Hou Ji and his human successors eat grains and vegetables (and, implicitly, meats) here below on earth, via the mouth; the divine Di, above in the heavens, eats the rising fragrance of the cooked foods, via the nose:

	Lower Position	*Higher Position*
Eaters	Hou Ji; people of Zhou	Di
Station	Earth	Heaven
Foods eaten	Grains/vegetables and meats	Fragrances
Organ of consumption	Mouth	Nose

We find passages similar in this respect in later texts. In a seasonal schedule of activities laid out in the *Guanzi*, for example, we read that during the autumn, "the Son of Heaven issues orders commanding the officer in charge of sacrifices to select suitable animals and birds from their pens and suitable offerings of early ripening grains to present for use in ancestral temples and the five household sacrifices. Ghosts and spirits will consume their *qi*, while gentlemen ingest their sapors."[5] Other such passages will be seen below.

In the *Huainanzi* we find the following sitiogony:

> In ancient times people ate vegetation and drank from streams; they picked fruit from trees and ate the flesh of shellfish and insects. In those times there was much illness and suffering, as well as injury from poisons. Thereupon the Divine Farmer (Shennong) for the first time taught the people to sow the five grains and diagnose the quality of soils—which were arid or wet, fertile or barren, highland or lowland.

> He tasted the flavors of the hundred plants and the sweetness and brackishness of streams and springs, causing the people to know which were to be avoided and which used. In the process he himself would suffer poisonings seventy times a day.[6]

Here Shennong leads society from a gathering stage to one of agriculture. The narrative goes on to tell of how, subsequently, morality was first taught under Yao, how dwellings were first constructed under Shun so that people no longer had to live in caves, how Yu channeled the waters, and how Tang instituted regular hours of sleeping and waking and systems of caring for the dead, sick, and unfortunate. One argument implicit in this tale is that agriculture was a necessary condition for the flourishing of other aspects of civilization that, on this view, arose later. A similar narrative, focusing on Yao, appears in the *Mencius* (3A.4; Puett 2001, 108–09).

A passage in the *Liji* portrays aspects of the origins of sacrificial rites for ancestors and gods. At first people lived in caves and nests; "they knew not yet the transforming power of fire, but ate the fruits of plants and trees, and the flesh of birds and beasts, drinking their blood, swallowing also the hair and feathers. They knew not yet the use of flax and silk, but clothed themselves with feathers and skins." Then came the use of fire, which allowed for the making of tools for advanced building arts and for specific cooking operations and the making of liquors. The burden of the passage is to argue that this development, along with textile work, allowed not only for better living but also for better care of the dead in ways that are perpetuated in rites performed down to the present; as the text puts it, "[the people] were thus able to nourish the living and send off the dead [properly], serving ghosts, spirits, and Di on high. In all these things we follow those beginnings."[7] Thanks to fire, cooking, and the fashioning of textiles, the dead may be properly housed in well-built tombs, clothed in fine garments, and fed with cooked foods and spirits—precisely what we find in excavated Han tombs.

In the *Han Feizi* we find the following sitiogony of cooked food:

> In the earliest times . . . the people lived on fruit, berries, mussels, and clams—things that sometimes became so rank and fetid that they hurt people's stomachs, and many became sick. Then a sage appeared who created the boring of wood to produce fire so as to transform the rank and putrid foods. The people were so delighted by this that they made him ruler of the world and called him the Fire-Drill Man (Suiren 燧人).[8]

In chapter sixteen of the *Zhuangzi*, perhaps datable to the third century BCE, Suiren is the first ruler mentioned in a series of what were usually taken to be civilizational advances but which are here portrayed as initiating the decline of Power and the ever-farther departure from the natural Dao into systems of social constraint, culture (here criticized), and information (Graham 1981, 171). Similar in spirit is a passage found in the fourth-century CE

Uncollected Records (*Shiyi ji* 拾遺記), which also features Suiren in this key role and also sees the use of fire as the beginnings of human descent into the balefulness of what passes for civilization (Campany 1996, 64–67). Such counter narratives agree with the above cited narratives that cooking and agriculture are key elements of the known social order and of ritual, and so they attack those points.

Not all sitiogonic passages are thus socio-mythic in character; a few are situated within five-phases, *qi*-based systematic cosmologies and cosmogonies, and here it is the exalted *qi* pedigree of grains, rather than their descent from the ministrations of an ancient culture hero, that is emphasized. Consider the opening passage of the "Neiye" 内業 ("Inner Training") chapter of the *Guanzi* (assembled ca. 26 BCE from earlier materials; Rickett 1993, 244):

> In all cases the essence (*jing* 精) of things is what gives them life.
> Below (or descending) it gives life to the five grains;
> Above (or ascending) it creates the arrayed stars.
> When it floats between the sky and earth, we call them ghosts or spirits;
> When it is stored in the breast, we call them sagely persons.[9]

Beginning with the first mentioned item, and then arranging the rest by degree of spatial elevation (with indentation marking the two subpairings, grains/stars and sages/spirits), we get the following hierarchical taxonomy:

In This Station:	*Essence Manifests as:*
Below (rooted in the earth)	Grains
In people's chests [stored state]	Sages
Between the sky and earth [flowing state]	Ghosts and spirits
Above (hung in the sky)	Stars

The text sets up analogies: grains are to the earth as the stars are to the heavens; grains are terrestrial stars, stars are celestial grains, each holding an analogous place in its own proper realm. Further, grains are to ordinary plants as sages are to ordinary people: just as sages have trained and cultivated themselves, carrying essence within their chests, so grains represent a form of plant life cultivated by human labor and thus harboring superior nourishment.

I know of no text that exalts grains more highly than the *Guanzi*. More than once we find it said that "The five grains and the eating of rice are the people's Director of Allotted Lifespans (*siming* 司命),"[10] an extraordinary metaphor likening grains to the forbidding deity who already by the fourth and third centuries BCE was held to enforce predetermined limits on people's lifespans (Chard 1994; Campany 2005). Or again, in explaining why it is that "the altars to land and grain" (*sheji* 社稷) are "more to be valued than

parents"—a truly astounding statement—the text offers: "When city and suburban walls have been destroyed and the altars to Land and Grain no longer receive blood and food sacrifices, there will no longer be any live ministers. However, after the death of their parents, the children do not die. This is the reason the altars to Land and Grain are to be valued more than parents" (Rickett 1998, 438 [modified]).

Some of the human or quasi-divine progenitors of agriculture, cooking, and sacrifice were honored with sacrifices. The cursory *Liji* passage on the twelfth-month *zha* 蜡 festival suggests year-end harvest thank-offerings to the First Husbandman, the divine overseers of husbandry, and the hundred grains, as well as to the gods of the fields and apparently both domestic and wild animals; it was a calendrical moment in which due requital was paid—in sacrificial food—to the myriad things for their feeding and support of humanity.[11] Furthermore, from the Han onward the spring ceremony known simply as Plowing formed part of the imperial ritual system; it opened with an offering to Shennong, followed by the emperor and officials ritually breaking the ground in a sacred field used to grow the grains used in court sacrifices (*Hou Han shu*, 3106; Bodde 1975, 223–41). The founding Han emperor also instituted regular sacrifices to Hou Ji (*Shiji*, 28.1380; *Han shu*, 30.1211).

The Centrality of Agricultural Control and of Sacrifice to the State

It is clear that, for many authors in the late Warring States, Qin, and Han, a primary function and prerogative of the state was to assure a good agricultural harvest and then to manage it carefully. Legal documents found at Shuihudi dating to 217 BCE reveal the care taken by the Qin state to manage grain stores, even down to the local level, and provide insight into the way in which foods of the sacrificial system—here, wine and meat—bound participants in rituals together. Wine and meat consumed before the gods sealed legal bonds between parties (Yates 1995, 352–57, 359–60, 361). The *Liji* portrays the careful notation of annual grain harvests and the management of seed for the coming year as key functions of the state (Legge 1885, pt. 3, 221, 293, 308). Conversely, throughout the "Monthly Ordinances" chapter of the same text, one frequently mentioned effect of the ruler's acting out of season is that the five grains do not germinate or mature properly. "Minister of fields" was a key high office in the standard accounts of governmental structure of the era. Additionally, state sacrifices requited the gods for timely rains and abundant harvests (Wilson 2002, 251). Political authority, agricultural production, and state-sponsored sacrifice were inextricably interwoven.

Indicative of the importance of grains in the mainstream cuisine and of the centrality of the control of agriculture to the symbolic as well as economic capital of the state were the meanings attached to the "altars to

[the gods of] soil and grain" (*sheji* 社稷)—altars to gods who were the recipients of sacrifices "to requite them for the merit of having given birth to grains and living things," as Wang Chong put it in the first-century CE (*Lunheng*, 25.1049; Forke 1962, vol. 1, 510). Along with the temple to the royal or imperial ancestors (*zongmiao* 宗廟), with which they were paired, these altars were the ritual and symbolic center of the realm, their safety synonymous with the state's. A healthy state was one in which the *sheji* "feed on blood" (*Shiji*, 34.1562, 86.2536); the inability of a state's *sheji* to feed on blood sacrifice constituted a national disaster (*Shiji*, 87.2549; *Han shu*, 2.53). Setting up a new dynasty required eliminating the *sheji* of the preceding dynasty and erecting one's own (*Shiji*, 8.370); inheriting the *sheji* or setting up new ones was tantamount to rulership (Graham 1981, 207; 1990, 170). The destruction of a dynasty's or kingdom's *sheji* was a disaster tantamount to the end of its political reign, the cutting off of its people's descent lines, or the overwhelming of its population (*Shiji*, 6.278, 79.2403, 89.2573; *Han shu*, 50.2007). To embark on a policy that endangered the *sheji* was to endanger the realm, so much so that the expression "to imperil the *sheji*" became a synecdoche for any calamitous undertaking (e.g., *Han shu*, 46.1910). In the *Liji*, two passages claim that important events in the realm should be announced to the gods and spirits of the *sheji, zongmiao*, and mountains and rivers; military expeditions began only once offerings had been made at the *sheji* and *zongmiao* and the commander had received his charge there.

Not only were the spirits of heaven, earth, mountains, rivers, soil, and grain fed in sacrifices orchestrated by the state. The human dead were also fed by the living: the royal/imperial dead by the state, others by their living descendants. This obligation to feed the ancestral dead—notably in offerings of grains, liquors (grain products), and meat—was of course nothing short of foundational to Chinese society and is voluminously attested both in transmitted texts and in archeologically recovered documents and grave goods, the latter including cooked meals laid out as if for a banquet and supplies of food and utensils for use by the dead in the tomb. The proper extent of this ritualized culinary service was perennially debated, with authors of various persuasions trying to curb excess—lavish offerings having become, among other things, a mode of conspicuous consumption and a status marker among the living[12]—but that the living were obliged to feed the dead was assumed by all parties, even those (such as the first-century CE Wang Chong) who argued that the dead lacked consciousness and could not therefore receive or be grateful for food offerings. In numerous stories preserved in late Warring States, Han, and early medieval texts, unfed ghosts complain about their lot or thank those non-kin who, out of compassion, offer to feed or rebury them (Campany 1991; 1996, 377–84). Sometimes the dead are represented as making specific requests and having particular preferences regarding their food and clothing (Forke 1962, vol. 1, 512; Harper 1994). The unquiet dead who went without normal food offerings were a special object of anxiety and received special ritual attentions and feedings (Kleeman 1994a, 195; Chard 1999, 241–42).

Feeding the ancestral dead was an emotionally charged event in which sensory and verbal as well as commensal contact between the living and the dead was briefly but powerfully reopened. At the banquet table, a living descendant acted as ritual impersonator (*shi* 尸) of the honored ancestor. Offerings were preceded by a period of seclusion, purification, and fasting. The *Liji* insists that only after completing this fasting for the full period of three days will the sacrificer be able to *see and hear* the beings he is feeding, a passage undoubtedly reflective of the often repeated yet misconstrued Confucian remark that one is to "sacrifice to the spirits as if the spirits are present."[13] Note that here one temporarily abstained from food in order to purify oneself to see the spirits of the dead when presenting food to them and eating with them.

The chronological, ideological, and generic variety of the texts I have juxtaposed—while it would be a liability in an attempt to do justice to any one of those texts taken separately—at least has one advantage for my purposes. It indicates the depth and breadth of cultural assumptions about the priority of grains, cooking, sacrifice (of meats and grains), agriculture and its products, and the extent to which these were central to political authority, social function, and cultural identity. With rare exceptions, the spirits of nature as well as the human dead were thought of as needing to eat, and it was the job of the living human community to feed them. What they were fed was "grains"—synecdochic for the products of agriculture—and meats. Grain was, in short, a symbol and summation of culture itself, or rather of nature acculturated, as well as of the fully human community. A natural locus of nutritive essence, grain nevertheless required cooperative, communal, differentiated stages of production to be transformed into food. Thus transformed, it was the most culturally celebrated food of humans (both living and dead) and of gods.

Alternate Cuisines for Superior Eaters

Many late Warring States, Qin, Han, and early medieval textual and visual representations depict or prescribe an array of culinary possibilities other than the mainstream (elite) diet. They do not offer these possibilities neutrally, as a simple expansion of the choices available to consumers of food and of texts, but rather they recommend them as superior and imply or state that those who practice them are superior.

Eating qi *is Better than Eating Grains*

I begin with the following well-known passage from the oldest portion of the *Zhuangzi*, written ca. 320 BCE:

> Jian Wu put a question to Lian Shu: "I heard Jie Yu say something. . . . I was amazed and frightened by his words. . . ." "What did he say?"

> "He said that on the distant mountain of Guyi a divine man dwells. His skin and flesh are like ice and snow. He is gentle as a virgin. He does not eat the five grains, but rather sucks wind and drinks dew. He rides the *qi* of clouds and mounts dragons, roaming beyond the four seas. When the spirits in him congeal, this causes creatures to be free from plagues and the year's grain crops to ripen—I thought him crazy and did not believe him."[14]

Now it would be a mistake to lump this strange figure into the ranks of those who would soon become known as transcendents. For one thing, his rhetorical function is to serve as one of a series of things beyond the ken of ordinary folk, and not as representative of a class of deathless beings. The passage does not suggest that readers should or can emulate the divine man (although he is clearly presented as admirable). And for all his remarkable properties there is no mention of long life or immortality. On the other hand, each of the properties that do mark him as different from ordinary humans will have become part of the repertoire of transcendents within the next two centuries: (1) Taxonomically he is neither a spirit nor a man, but something in between, a "divine man," perhaps a hybrid or else one of a distinct class of beings. (2) As to his diet, he does not eat the five grains but subsists on wind and dew. We might infer that it is this diet that accounts for his wondrously refined body and also, since he is a "divine man," that this diet is being claimed superior to one based on grains. (3) He dwells at a distant place, not in the central kingdom, and on a mountain, not on agricultural plains; he also roams beyond the known limits of the settled world. (4) He travels by riding *qi* and dragons, implying flight and ascension into the heavens. (5) Despite his extreme distance, by some unexplained mechanism his "spirit-congealing" activities benefit the people of the central kingdom, warding off illnesses and aiding their agricultural labors. This being who does not cultivate or consume grains somehow helps them grow by his self-cultivational disciplines.

The song "Far Roaming" in the *Chuci* maps out a cosmic journey and a path of self-cultivation toward a specific sort of transcendence. For our purposes it suffices to focus on two clusters of lines. The first reads:

> I shall follow, then, Wang Qiao 王喬 for my pleasure and amusement
> Sup on the six *qi* and drink Drifting Flow ?
> Rinse my mouth with True Yang and swallow Dawn Aurora
> Conserve the limpid clarity of spirit illumination ?
> As essence and *qi* enter in, pollution and filth are expelled.[15]

Here, the poet, following the example of the noted transcendent Wang Qiao, begins a culinary regime based on *qi* and, by implication, no longer on grain food. By the final verse, the purifying effects of this regime begin to be noted. As Harper explains, the three types of *qi* named in the second and third lines are the beneficial *qi* of midnight, midday, and dawn respectively.

The beneficial six types of *qi*, mentioned here as a class, correspond spatially to the four quarters, heaven above, and earth below, and temporally to the seasons, and later texts specify seasonal schedules by which to ingest them; there are also five types of *qi* to be avoided, already mentioned in some Mawangdui manuscripts (see below).

After receiving instruction from Wang Qiao, the poet flies on "to the Feathered Persons [transcendents] at the Cinnabar Mound, loitering in the long-standing land where death is not," and proceeds to bathe at other mythic destinations in the cardinal directions till he "sucks in the dark liquor of the Flying Springs" (a site located at the western Mt. Kunlun). He then declares:

My essence, becoming whole and unmixed, now took on strength.
As my body, weakening and wasting, turned tender and listless;
And my spirit, growing fine and subtle, was released, unrestrained.

The transformation of *qi* into sustenance sufficient to support life, rendering ordinary foods obsolete, is described with metaphors grounded in the processing of agricultural products and the smelting of metallic ores. The poet's body is denominated as if it were the raw material of a smelting process in which the essence is purified and strengthened, the bodily form is melted away, and the spirit is released. This conception of what it means to transcend—that one's "essence" and "spirit" are released from the dross of the "bodily form"—is merely one conception, by no means the only or even the predominant one, and is sharply at odds, as noted below, with others that prioritize the preservation and strengthening of the body. Yet it is congruent with passages elsewhere that hierarchize the pair "spirit"/body.

A silk manuscript found at Mawangdui titled "Eliminating Grain and Eating *Qi*" (*Quegu shiqi* 却穀食氣; Harper 1998, 305–09) outlines a method for avoiding "grains" by ingesting *qi* according to scheduled procedures and by consuming the herb pyrrosia, used here as a drug to treat urine retention when not eating. Modes of exhalation are prescribed, and seasonal and age-based guidelines for the practitioner's ingestion of the various types of beneficial *qi* are laid out along with the five types of harmful *qi* to be avoided. The brief text twice posits a hierarchy of eaters, those who eat grain versus those who eat *qi*; in the first passage the basis for this hierarchy is not made clear, but in the second we read: "Those who eat grain eat what is square; those who eat *qi* eat what is round. Round is heaven; square is earth." No specific benefits of this regimen are promised—perhaps details on them are lost in the several lacunae—but the hierarchy is clear: eating grain is to eating *qi* as earth is to heaven.

Similarly, the Heshanggong 河上公 commentary to the second line of chapter six (in the received ordering of chapters) of the *Daodejing*, which reads "This is called the mysterious female," informs us:

"Mysterious" refers to heaven; in people it is the nose. "Female" refers to earth; in people it is the mouth. Heaven feeds people with the

> five types of *qi*, which enter through the nose and are deposited in the heart. The five *qi* are pure and subtle and they constitute [in people] the essence, spirit, intelligence, voice, hearing, and the five natures. Their ghosts are termed cloudsouls. The cloudsouls are male and come and go through the nose; they course through the way of heaven; this is why the nose is the Mysterious. Earth feeds people with the five sapors, which enter through the mouth and are deposited in the stomach. The five sapors are impure and turbid and they constitute the form, skeleton, bones, blood, vessels, and the six emotions. Their ghosts are termed whitesouls. The whitesouls are female and come and go through the mouth; they course through earth; this is why the mouth is the Female.[16]

Here a hierarchy of foods is correlated with other hierarchies:

In this Domain	*The Higher Position Is*	*The Lower Position Is*
Cosmos	Heaven	Earth
Human facial apertures	Nose	Mouth
Foods	The five types of *qi*	The five sapors
Components of the self	Spirit, essence, etc.	Body, bones, etc.
"Ghosts"	Cloudsouls	Whitesouls
Gender	Male	Female

The Mawangdui bamboo strip manuscript known as "Ten Questions" (*Shi wen* 十問), copied between 180 and 168 BCE (Harper 1998, 28–29), reveals diverse techniques for the intake, circulation, and cultivation of *qi* utilizing breathing, stretching, and sexual intercourse. Here there is no mention of a need to avoid grains, and one passage implies that the method outlined for "eating Yin" prepares the body for the maximally advantageous intake of "drink and food"—although that food may be the otherwise unspecified "diet of elemental stuff" mentioned earlier in the text and perhaps synonymous with the expression *su shi* 素食, used in the *Mozi* to indicate a diet of uncultivated plants gathered from the wild.[17] But a dialogue in this text sets up a hierarchy in which being "signless," "formless," and "bodiless" are pronounced superior to their alternatives; it is in these states that the "culminant essence of heaven and earth" is said to be born and it is "signlessness" that the practitioner is said to accumulate when he "cultivates *qi* and concentrates essence." As Harper points out, the *Huainanzi* uses "formless" as an epithet for Dao or One and terms the person who cultivates the Dao "bodiless" as well as formless; the *Guanzi* attests to the notion that the Dao is "signless" and gives the oldest statement that obtaining the Dao is the key to life and losing it means death (Harper 1998, 394 n.1). We see these tropes again below. Methods for eating *qi* and sucking "sweet dew" are then outlined, and the text closes by explicitly promising deathlessness to those who practice its methods. Successful practitioners will

become a spirit, achieve "release of the form" (*xingjie* 形解), ascend on high, and become as constant as heaven and earth, not dying (Harper 1998, 392–99).[18]

In the *Huainanzi* treatise on topography (second-century BCE) we find a series of correlations between the types of soils prevalent in people's habitats and their dispositions, followed by a list of correlations between diets and dispositions. The last four items read as follows: "Those who eat flesh are brave and daring but fierce. Those who eat *qi* are spirit-illumined and live long. Those who eat grains are knowledgeable and clever but short-lived. Those who do not eat do not die; they are (or become) spirits."[19] Rearranging the order of the passage to reflect the ascending hierarchy it entails, we see that:

	Have the Following Properties	
Those Who Eat	*Positive +*	*Negative −*
Flesh	Brave, daring	Fierce
Grains	Knowledgeable, clever	Short-lived
qi	Spirit-illumined, long-lived	[None]
Nothing	Deathless; are spirits	[None]

Feeding on *qi*, then, is clearly superior to eating flesh and grains and confers longevity. Even better is to eat nothing at all, which confers deathlessness and is a property of spirits. This claim that spirits need not eat seems novel for its time and implies a new class of beings who would, it is implied, require no sacrificial ministrations from the human community.

At one point in the massive *Scripture of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing*), assembled in the second century CE but incorporating older material,[20] we find an interlocutor posing the question: "What are the functions or offices of the nine grades of persons?" The Celestial Tutor gives an answer summarizable in the following table, where left-hand entries are the types of persons mentioned and right-hand entries are what they are assigned to manage (*Taiping jing*, 88–91):

Formless Divine Persons of Fine *qi*	Primordial *qi*
Greater divine persons	Heaven
Perfected persons	Earth
Transcendent persons	The four seasons
Persons of the great Dao	The five phases
Sages	Yin and Yang
Worthies	Writings, books, and transmitted speech
Ordinary people	Plants, trees, and the five grains
Servants and slaves	Material goods

Key for our purposes is the hierarchical opposition between two bundles of things: at the top, divinity, formlessness, and "primordial *qi*" (with other

modes of divinity, perfected ones, transcendents, and "persons of the Dao" also in high echelons); second from the bottom, ordinary humanity, vegetation, and the five grains. Next we are told that when each of the nine types of people controls (or harmonizes) the corresponding type of *qi*, then the nine types of *qi* and yin and yang will be harmonized and the "inherited burden" from previous generations will be eliminated, and this brings about the coming of the eponymous Great Peace. Linked to this hierarchy is the directive that superior practitioners "must begin by not eating what has form but rather eating *qi* so as to unite with the primordial *qi*." To do this they shut themselves inside a thatch hut, fasting, not looking upon anything evil or defiled—language clearly echoing the *Liji*'s accounts of fasting before ancestral sacrifices—daily refining their forms and not grasping after what they desire, until they ascend to assist the transcendents and perfected ones in celestial rule based on primordial *qi*.

Elsewhere in this text one is enjoined to eat moderately, gradually replacing foods with *qi* and medicinals until one consumes only things without bodily form (*Taiping jing*, 684, 466). Or again:

> The question was asked: "What do the higher, middle, and lower beings who have obtained the way and surpassed the world (or crossed the ages) eat?" The reply: "The uppermost rank eat wind and *qi*, the second rank eat medicinal sapors, and the third rank eat little [food], reducing what passes through their stomach and intestines." It was said further: "Heaven is extremely distant and knows no bounds. If one does not eat wind and *qi*, how can one travel quickly enough to circuit completely through the courses of heaven? Further, if one is to work alongside the spirit-envoys and be associated with them, one must eat wind and *qi*. At the next [lower] level, if one is to match the essences of earth in one's powers, harmonize the five types of soil, look down from above on mountains and rivers, follow mountain chains and enter waterways, so as to have commerce with the changings of earth and eat and work together with [others of this level], then one cannot eat grains; one drinks water and practices [medicinal formulas]. At the next [and lowest] level, eating in moderation is the way. Although one does not thus firmly establish one's form, one [eats] less than ordinary people and is thus slightly different from them. Therefore even those who [merely] eat little so as to pass little through their intestines, are people who are in the process of achieving the way." (*Taiping jing*, 716–17)

In other passages the *Scripture* provides instructions for specific methods of "eating wind and *qi*" to maximum advantage (*Taiping jing*, 259, 699–700).

By the first-century BCE, the idea that some practitioners were abstaining from grains while practicing methods for consuming, directing, and cultivating *qi* as alternate nourishment was ubiquitous, whether we find authors advocating or criticizing it. In the *Shiji* biography of Zhang Liang 張良, for

example, we read that late in his life, having reached remarkable social heights, he declared himself ready to abandon the affairs of the human world and "simply follow Master Redpine [like Wang Qiao, an exemplary ancient transcendent] and go roaming," whereupon "he practiced grain avoidance, guiding and pulling, and lightening the body." But later the Han empress pressured him to eat (or force-fed him?), leaving Zhang "no recourse but to submit to compulsion and eat"—and the next thing we learn is that he died eight years later (*Shiji*, 55.2048). Around 70–80 CE, Wang Chong also documented that grain avoidance was widely claimed to be a route to transcendence, a claim he disputed:

> There are many who take people who avoid grains and do not eat to be persons with *dao* arts. They speak of Wangzi Qiao and the like, who, in not eating grains and in eating differently than ordinary people, therefore also achieved a different longevity than that of ordinary people, exceeding a hundred [years of age], surpassing the world, and thus becoming transcendent persons. This too is false.

Wang proceeds to argue that it is natural for people to eat since they were given mouths and teeth for the intake of food and alimentary canals for its digestion and the elimination of waste. He then continues:

> People, when alive, use food as [the source of] their *qi*, just as plants and trees when alive draw *qi* from the soil. Pull up the roots of a plant or tree, separate them from the soil, and they will wither and soon die. Shut up a person's mouth so that he cannot eat and he will starve and not live long. Masters of *dao* boast to others, saying, "The perfected man consumes *qi*" and making *qi* their food. Thus it is handed down that "those who eat *qi* live long and do not die"[21] [and that] although it is not on grains that they become full, they nevertheless fill themselves by means of *qi*. This too is false. (*Lunheng*, 7.335–36; cf. Forke 1962, vol. 1, 347–49)

The somber conclusion of Zhang Liang's story is reminiscent of the following poignant tale found in the Han work *Arrayed Traditions of Transcendents* (*Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳) but reworked by Ge Hong 葛洪 (282–343 CE) or some intermediate redactor:

> During the reign of Emperor Cheng of the Han, hunters in the Zhongnan Mountains saw a person who wore no clothes, his body covered with black hair. Upon seeing this person, the hunters wanted to pursue and capture him, but the person leapt over gullies and valleys as if in flight, and so could not be overtaken. The hunters then stealthily observed where the person dwelled, surrounded and captured him, whereupon they determined that the person was a woman.

> Upon questioning, she said, "I was originally a woman of the Qin palace. When I heard that invaders from the east had arrived, that the King of Qin would go out and surrender, and that the palace buildings would be burned, I fled in fright into the mountains. Famished, I was on the verge of dying by starvation when an old man taught me to eat the resin and nuts of pines. At first they were bitter, but gradually I grew accustomed to them. They enabled me to feel neither hunger nor thirst; in winter I was not cold, in summer I was not hot." Calculation showed that the woman . . . must be more than two hundred years old. . . .
>
> The hunters took the woman back in. They offered her grain to eat. When she first smelled the stink of the grain, she vomited, and only after several days could she tolerate it. After little more than two years of this [diet], her body hair fell out; she turned old and died. Had she not been caught by men, she would have become a transcendent. (*Baopuzi neipian*, 207)

Few narratives more succinctly summarize the argument that ordinary foods or "grains" prevent transcendence. Often avoidance of grains, is assisted by ingesting a simple plant product gathered in the wilds; whether this regimen helps by virtue of its appetite-suppressing properties or its provision of superior nourishment is here unclear. Elsewhere pine resin is said to transform in the ground into a marvelous, longevity-conferring herb (Campany 2002, 25).

In *Arrayed Traditions of Transcendents*, one adept is said to have avoided the five grains and fed on the flowers of various herbs instead; another, to have avoided grains, absorbed dew, and fed on pine nuts, asparagus root (on which more later), and "stony fat"; and still another to have subsisted on sesame, which was still an exotic import (Kaltenmark 1953, 48–50, 65–67, 135–37). "Grain avoidance," the shunning of ordinary agriculture-based foods, continued to be a key marker of a person engaged in the pursuit of transcendence in Ge Hong's time and beyond, for he writes of contemporary practitioners he regards as charlatans who announce that they have "cut off [the ingestion of] grains" so as to attract followers (*Baopuzi neipian*, 346). Many of the adepts he regards as successful transcendents included grain avoidance and *qi* ingestion among their methods, though none of them gain transcendence by these means alone (for the reason that Ge Hong polemically favored alchemy above other methods). In some contexts—such as in the opening pages of the fifteenth of Ge Hong's *Baopuzi neipian*—it becomes clear that "avoiding grains" is tantamount to not eating food at all, merely swallowing saliva and *qi* and ingesting medicinal preparations to suppress appetite and strengthen the body. A number of adepts, including Dong Jing 董京, are said to have accomplished this (Campany 2002, 24, 300). As a test of his arts, Zuo Ci 左慈 was reportedly enclosed in a room by Cao Cao 曹操, denied food, and permitted only water for one whole year; he emerged looking just as he had when he went in. Elsewhere a method for

surviving famine years by not eating is attributed to this same master, and other methods for not eating are attributed to other transcendents-in-the-making, such as Gan Shi 甘始, who also was reported to have gone a whole year without eating food (Campany 2002, 150, 279–80, 284, 151–52).

The extant *Scripture of the Five Numinous Treasure Talismans* (*Lingbao wufu jing* 靈寶五符經), a text assembled ca. 280 CE, features an exercise in which the cosmic "sprouts" of the pentacolored *qi* of the five directions are systematically ingested, leading to transcendence (HY 388, 3.12a–b). Following an outline of this method, which is embedded within a narrative of its own initial revelation, the scripture continues with the following lines:

> The three transcendent kings further declared to the Thearch: "We formerly fed according to this method and thereby attained transcendence. Our former teacher had us increase the sweet spring within our mouths and then swallow to the following twenty-two word incantation: 'The white stones, craggy, proceed in order;[22] the spring, bubbling and pervading, becomes a perfected juice; drinking it, I obtain long life, my long life span becoming even longer!' You, too, can practice this. If you are able to continuously ingest the perfected One without ceasing, swallow the floriate pond without resting, and keep your *qi* shut within you without flagging, then you will forthwith attain the Dao and you will have cut off grains; you need no longer follow the changes of the moon for completion.[23] The people of primordial antiquity lived long because they remained in leisure and did not eat grains. The Verse of Great Existence says: 'The five grains are bores that gouge out life span; they rot and befoul the five viscera [lit. the five storehouses] and shorten the allotted life span. Once this food enters the mouth there is no further hope of great longevity. If you wish not to die, you must keep your intestines free of sediment. If you wish to live long, you must make the *qi* of your viscera/storehouses clean and pure[24] [by] decanting the floriate juice into the body. You will then meet heaven with the jade liquid in your mouth, and you and heaven will reach the same longevity.' "[25]

We note once again how metaphors drawn from mainstream cuisine are wielded to describe a discipline which overturns that cuisine. To my knowledge, this is one of the earliest passages in which grains are attacked based on what we might call negative internalist reasons—that is, on the grounds that they harm the body in specific, theorized ways. Again we should beware of the sort of lumping that would read this passage as the implicit rationale underlying all of the passages on grain avoidance adduced above. In those earlier passages, there is no hint of the notion that grains (i.e., mainstream foods) actually harm the body;[26] the argument is rather that *qi* and other more refined substances, when ingested and circulated in esoterically prescribed ways, give superior, longevity-inducing nourishment. This argument in turn rested on a view of the body as a self-sufficient microcosm that

could imbibe beneficial essences from the cosmos and then close itself off like a sealed reaction-vessel to further refine and recycle them, periodically "exhaling the old and inhaling the new" but otherwise drastically minimizing contact with the surrounding sensory, cultural, and social world. From the same view of the body came ideas and practices of "embryonic breathing" or "breathing like a fetus" (*taixi* 胎息) found in many early texts (Campany 2002, 365, n. 23).

Another theory of the body might be related to early internalist rationales for the avoidance of grain. I refer to the theory that the body from its conception harbors biospiritual parasites known alternately as the "three worms" (*san chong* 三蟲) or "three corpses" (*san shi* 三尸; Campany 2002, 49–52). Various early weft texts and scriptures portray these beings in both zoomorphic and bureaucratic terms. They were said to appear as maggots in excrement and lack organs of sight and hearing, suggestive of tapeworms, but also to ascend monthly to report to register-keeping officials of their human hosts' misdeeds so as to hasten their hosts' deaths, leaving the corpses/worms free to roam about stealing offering foods. In fourth century CE and earlier texts are preserved dozens of methods for expelling these baleful parasites (Lévi 1983, 1989). An as yet unanswered question, however, is whether, in early texts, it is claimed that these beings feed on grains or are a byproduct of their digestion. One finds this notion in certain texts anthologized in the compendium *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, compiled ca. 1028 CE,[27] but these texts, of uncertain provenance, seem by their content and wording to postdate the fourth century. At the time of writing I am unaware of any clear linkage between the three worms or corpses and the five grains in texts datable to ca. 320 CE or earlier.

Feeding on Exotic Delicacies of the Cosmos

The idea that strange locales on the distant horizons of the known world harbor longevity- or transcendence-inducing substances is as old in China as the goal of transcendence itself. We find numerous references to the hope of finding these mysterious realms, penetrating their veil of mystery and ingesting their marvelous, potent products. In general, these products seem to fall into three sometimes fuzzy categories: (1) naturally occurring trees, herbs, or fungi, ready for gathering and consumption; (2) naturally found minerals; and (3) "elixirs" of one or another sort, implying some degree of prior human or divine processing of natural ingredients.

To the east, there were Penglai 蓬萊, Yingzhou 瀛洲, and other ocean isles, where transcendents and their herbs or elixirs of deathlessness were thought to lurk; Qin and Han rulers famously sent expeditions to search for them, and there were reports of sightings—but no successful imperially sponsored retrievals—of these island paradises' herbs and drugs. To the west, there were Mount Kunlun 崑崙 and the divine Queen Mother of the West, each of them associated with immortality-inducing products (and other paradisal delights) before becoming associated with each other.

The lore concerning these exotic locales and their products is well known (Loewe 1979). For our purposes, three features are significant. One is that these strange realms, distant from the agricultural heartland, are imagined as the sources of ingestible substances that are longevity-producing alternatives to ordinary food. A second feature is that both Kunlun and the eastern isles are uniformly described in texts—and pictured in visual iconography and in functional objects such as censers—as mountains. This facet again emphasizes their difference from the topography of the agrarian plains and river valleys of the Chinese heartland: mountains were places where grains and other mainstream crops could not be grown, but where other life-prolonging products grew naturally without need of cultivation. The third feature that these locations all share is difficulty of access. Their spatial distance is a code for other sorts of barriers. To obtain the wondrous ingestible products they harbor requires initiation and training in esoteric arts, a fact which itself announces these products' superiority to domestic foods.

Closer to home—removed from the agrarian lowlands not horizontally but vertically—were the mountains of China, seen as dangerous zones where wild animals, semi-barbaric ethnic groups, and aggressive spirits lurked and where humans from the plains fled to escape centralized bureaucratic control (Kleeman 1994b). These nearer (though hardly domesticated) mountains, too, were portrayed as sources of exotic edibles with longevity-inducing, healing powers, capable of replacing grains, and also as restricted, perilous areas requiring mantic protection for safe entry. Both of these aspects of mountains are the sole subject of an entire essay by Ge Hong, and the second fascicle of the *Scripture of the Five Numinous Treasure Talismans* is devoted to scores of transcendence-arts recipes employing mountain herbs.[28] In this scripture and elsewhere, some of these herbs are explicitly recommended, among their other benefits, as replacements for grain food (e.g., HY 388, 2.15a–b).

Transcendents, then, were said to feed on exotic, longevity-enhancing substitutes for what in China was ordinary food, substances located only in zones removed (horizontally or vertically) by geographic distance and by barriers to access from the heartland of Chinese civilization. It is no wonder that transcendents were often represented in verbal description and iconic depiction as winged beings able to fly, and that the ability to travel long distances rapidly was one mantic art often mentioned as having been practiced by adepts (Campany 2002, 125–46; 2004). One of the marvelous arts often attributed to adepts in hagiographies and prescribed in scriptures is the ability to summon the "traveling kitchen" to deliver exotic, longevity-inducing foodstuffs to the adept rather than the adept's needing to travel outward to the limits of the world to secure them. Such banquets near home displayed the exotic cuisine of the cosmic periphery and of the heavens, and hagiographies record audiences' amazement at them (e.g., Campany 2002, 327).

Conclusion

Why did those in quest of transcendence, from the very earliest mention of any transcendent-like figures in texts, reject grains and other everyday foods? Why did they shun the totality of agricultural products in favor of *qi* or exotic flora and minerals, things not normally considered food at all? Why do we see such insistence on this point, across texts spanning six centuries and several ideologies and teaching widely variant methods and conceptions of transcendence?

The texts we have reviewed offer very little by way of an internalist critique of grains or other everyday foods. They all recommend avoiding grains and offer what they tout as superior alternatives, but on the question of precisely *why* grains are such inferior nourishment they have little or nothing to say. What little internalist critique we do find comes quite late—Eastern Han at the earliest—and does not seem well developed: ordinary foods, described as rotten and smelly, impurify a body that ought to be brought into *qi*-based resonance with heaven. We find an echo of this notion in Ge Hong's writings, but elsewhere we also find Ge Hong averring that "even the five grains can sustain people; when people get them they live, if cut off from them they die. How much the more, then, in the case of divine medicines of superior grade: how could their benefits to humans not be a myriad times that of the five grains?" (*Baopuzi neipian*, 71). In most discussions, then, it is not that prescribers and practitioners of transcendence arts portrayed ordinary food as harmful; it is rather that they had what they considered superior alternatives.

On the positive side, we do find some internalist justifications for ingesting *qi*: notions concerning the benefits of its circulation and cultivation in the body, grounded in wider views of the microcosmic self and in cosmogonies and cosmologies. And we find many promises of the spectacular benefits of ingesting one or another herb. Usually, however, *why* diets of *qi* or rare herbs and minerals should be regarded as better than ordinary food is a question that remains unanswered; we are merely told, but told repeatedly, *that* they are superior.

Take, for instance, the Heshanggong commentary passage and the Mawangdui text on avoiding grains adduced above, or the assertion, seen in several texts, that it is better to eat what has no form than to eat "formed" food. For these texts, eating *qi* surpasses eating food because the binary pair *qi*/food correlates with a series of other pairs in which one member outranks or bests the other. Eating *qi* is better than eating food in the same way that heaven outranks earth or the formless outranks form; the superiority of eating *qi*, once placed among these other asymmetrical pairs, is self-evident. Without a grain-based cuisine, the proposed *qi*-based cuisine would have no rhetorical or ideological traction; the prestige of eating *qi* is a function of the contrast with its culinary other. Similarly, a major reason for the claim (and belief) that certain wild herbs from distant lands had such longevity-bestowing power may have been simply that they were exotic.

Why did the gaze of these writers and practitioners stay so powerfully fixed on the cuisine to which they were constructing alternatives? I want to suggest that "grains" were, to echo a passage from Lévi-Strauss, "good to oppose" rather than being seen as intrinsically "bad to eat" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 89) and that they were good to oppose because of all that they expressed, symbolized, and implied, all of the other cultural values and institutions to which they were attached. Providing an alternative to eating grains meant providing an alternative to all that eating grains entailed, invoked, and had been linked to.

If cultivating and eating grains, cooking, and dwelling in settled agricultural communities were seen by some as quintessential marks of human civilization, then it is perhaps no coincidence that cuisines of transcendence exhibit precisely the antitheses of these three traits: they are (1) based on something other than grains (whether inhaled *qi* or *qi* as found in exotic foodstuffs gathered from the periphery); (2) ingested raw (already "cooked" by the action of heaven and earth) or else prepared according to secret methods different from the standard cooking techniques; and (3) consumed as part of a disciplined life partially lived in the mountains and roaming through the barrens of the cosmos, resulting in a feathered, flying, deathless being that was no longer human. If the advent of agriculture was a necessary condition for the flourishing of key cultural values and arts, the rejection of agriculture's products entailed a rejection of those values often couched in terms of a return to natural simplicity. That grain cultivation was often featured (by its proponents) more than the cooking of meat as a marker of proper civilization perhaps explains why grains were singled out for replacement by the creators of transcendence paths; later, the Celestial Master movements would focus on meat and blood as the key avoidances and would develop different contrastive ideologies based in part on the valuation of life.

If the divine progenitors and overseers of the annual agricultural cycle were thanked with elaborate, society-wide, imperially sponsored sacrifices, then adepts able to thrive without consuming the products of this cycle were, in effect, absenting themselves from this entire sacrificial system. Even more momentously, to the extent that these sacrifices implied that these gods needed or wanted to eat the products of the agricultural system they created and sponsored, transcendence-quest adepts were implicitly but unmistakably portrayed as superior to them in their ability to eschew agricultural products. If adepts required no ordinary foods, all the more did successful transcendents require no sacrificial food offerings, unlike the gods and spirits against whom they were constructed as a distinct category of suprahuman beings.[29] To no great surprise adepts are repeatedly portrayed as uniquely having the prerogative to command spirits and gods and to ignore their demands for sacrifice—demands that pressed ominously upon farmers and merchants but that the adept could afford to dismiss as overweening impudence.

To the extent that political authority was inextricably associated with the management of agriculture, and to the extent that the altars and sacrifices to

the gods of grain and soil were the symbolic and ritual center of the state, abstainers from agricultural products and from sacrificial foods transcended these structures of authority as well. No wonder, then, that they are repeatedly depicted, in texts both sympathetic and hostile to their claims, as refusing the importunities of rulers and officials, occasionally making a theatrically elaborate mockery of their attempts at coercion. Adepts repeatedly claimed exemption from rulers' sphere of command and asserted their right to deference from officials who wished to learn their secret arts, just as they claimed a higher place in the cosmic hierarchy than the gods to whom rulers and their administrations were obliged to perform sacrifice.

What, then, of the ancestor cult, that bedrock of civilization perhaps even older and certainly more ideologically freighted than agriculture? Ancestors needed to eat, unlike transcendents; more urgently, departed transcendents were no longer available to continue ancestral offerings. The patrilineal family and the core rites that sustained it depended for their continued existence not only on the uninterrupted generation of male descendants and their sacrifices but also on the continued death of ancestors. Large numbers of successful transcendents would undermine society in all three of these ways, removing people from the lineage system and disrupting its transgenerational continuity in pursuit of what others deemed a purely selfish goal. Opponents of the quest for transcendence were quick to attack it on these grounds. Lu Jia 陸賈 (fl. 200–180 BCE) criticized those who, hoping to achieve divine transcendence, abstained from the five grains, strained their bodies, cast aside the *Odes* and *Documents*, and exhausted their physiques while abandoning their parents and families (*Xinyu*, 6.10–11). Even the *Huainanzi* weighed in (HY 1176, 27.10a). In his *Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Inner Chapters*, Ge Hong has an interlocutor pose the problem sharply: "If upon examination it turned out that divine transcendence could be achieved by study, that people could thus fly upwards into the empyrean, would they not turn their backs on ordinary life and quit this world, so that no one any longer perform the rites of offering food? And then would not the ghosts of the ancestors, who possess consciousness, go hungry?"

This was a most serious charge. Ge Hong's response, anticipating what would soon become a standard Buddhist reply to the same challenge, was to argue that the adept's religious goal constituted not a lack of filiality but a higher form of it. And, characteristically, this higher filial path included the extension of the opportunity to eat superior foods to the adept's entire family:

> I have heard that preserving one's body free of injury is the ultimate in filiality. Does not the attainment of the way of transcendence, long life and everlasting vision, coming to an end only when Heaven and Earth do, surpass by far the returning intact to one's ancestral lineage that which one had received whole? For one could thereby ascend into the void, tread amidst phosphors, ride in a cloud-chariot with a rainbow canopy, *sup on mist from the aurora of dawn, inhale the purified essence of "mystic yellow." What one drinks there is liquor of jade and juice of gold; what*

> *one eats is excrescences of blue and efflorescence of vermilion*; one dwells in halls of agate and chambers of jasper; for travel, one roams aimlessly in Grand Purity. If the ghosts of the ancestors have consciousness, then they would share in one's glory, perhaps serving as advisers to the Five Thearchs, perhaps overseeing the hundred numina. They would receive such stations without requesting them. *For food, they would dine on floriate rarities*; for position, they would oversee [the dead in] Luofeng. . . . *None among them would go hungry*.[30]

Underlying this passage is the ancient view that merit, guilt, and fortune were not only matters for individuals but were also collectively shared by the family, both its living and its dead members. Hence, although in the short run from the family's point of view there might appear to be grave costs in one of its members' neglecting filial duty by cultivating himself in the hills, the benefits of his attaining transcendence would spread to all members of the patriline, even the dead, whose afterlife lot in both of the major categories of concern—food and otherworld office—would thus markedly improve. The claim is striking. We are not accustomed to linking the search for transcendence with a concern for aiding the familial dead, but Ge Hong is clearly claiming a sort of transfer of merit from the transcendent to his ancestors. No special mechanism or explanation is required, unlike the Buddhist system for transfer of merit; the distribution of benefits in the other world works just as it would in this one: all relatives share in the honor of a court appointment, whether the court be celestial or terrestrial, and in both cases the benefits are in part, quite characteristically, culinary.

I believe we do not understand cuisines of transcendence if we consider only their internalist meanings and functions. Those cuisines were at least as profoundly shaped by everything they appear to have been exquisitely crafted not to be. What they were not, and how they were not what they were not, figures importantly in assessing what they were and what they meant. Zhuangzi's aphorism—"Without an other, there is no self"—applies as much to the collective creation of traditions of discourse and practice as to individual epistemology and metaphysics.[31]

Notes

1. This essay is a shortened version of the paper presented at the Trinity College conference; an expanded version will be published elsewhere. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated; when quoting Western-language texts, I have converted all romanizations of Chinese into Pinyin. Dynastic histories are cited by fascicle and page number in the modern Zhonghua shuju editions. I am grateful to Roel Sterckx for inviting me to the conference, and to the participants, especially Robert Chard (respondent to my paper), for stimulating discussion; I also thank Julianna Lipschutz and Victor Mair for their comments on a draft. This essay was initially stimulated by a reading of Lévi (1983), from which I have learned much.
2. *Liji* ("Wang zhi"), 246–47, consulting Legge (1885), pt. 3, 228–30.
3. For evidence that "abstention from grains" meant the avoidance of normal food in general, and not simply of the five specific grains normally listed as comprised in the group (i.e., two kinds of millet, hemp, rice, and beans, or, in a common alternate list, two kinds of millet, rice, wheat, and pulse), see Campany (2002), 23–24, 190.

4. Consulting Waley (1960), 241–43, in rendering *Shijing*, 6.129–31; cf. Bodde (1975), 247.
5. Rickett (1998), 126; my translation differs. Wang Chong's discussion of sacrifices in the *Lunheng* also attends to the idea that spirits might absorb them through smell and through the nose. See *Lunheng*, 4.1047–55, and Forke (1962), vol. 1, 509–15.
6. HY 1176, 26.1a–b, consulting Birrell (1993), 49. A similar account in Lu Jia's *Xinyu* was possibly a source for this *Huainanzi* text; see *Xinyu*, 1.1; and Puett (2001), 153. On Shennong, see Graham (1986), 67–110.
7. *Liji*, 21.416, consulting Legge (1885), pt. 3, 369–70.
8. *Han Feizi*, 49.339, consulting Puett (2001), 77; and Knoblock (1988–94), vol. 3, 29.
9. Consulting Rickett (1998), 39; and Roth (1999), 46.
10. Tr. Rickett 1998, 377 [modified]; note 6 gives a list of other loci where the same statement appears.
11. See *Liji*, 26.499, 34.749a; Legge (1885), pt. 3, 431, pt. 4, 167; Bodde (1975), 68–74.
12. *Mozi*, 6.156–172; Knoblock and Riegel (2000), 227–33; Riegel (1995); Forke (1962), vol. 2, 369–75.
13. For example, *Liji*, 27.507, 49.830, and, most explicit, 47.805 ff. (cf. Legge 1885, pt. 4, 210–15): "During the days of vigil and purification [the mourner] thinks on the place where [the departed] sat, thinks on how they smiled and spoke, thinks on their aims and views, thinks on what they delighted in, thinks on what they enjoyed. On the third day of such vigil and purification he will see those for whom he has been keeping vigil and purifying himself."
14. *Zhuangzi*, ch. 1, lines 26–31 (HY ed.), consulting Graham (1981), 46. A similar and clearly derivative passage occurs in the much later *Liezi*. See *Liezi*, 2.44–46; Graham (1990), 35.
15. *Chuci*, 5.2b–3b ("Yuan you"), consulting Kroll (1996), 159–60; and Harper (1998), 307, n.1. This composition may date to the late fourth century BCE at the earliest or to the early Han at the latest.
16. *Daode zhenjing zhu* (HY 682), 1.5a–b. Heshanggong was assimilated by some into the ranks of transcendents. See Campany (2002), 305–7.
17. See Harper (1998), 385–87; *Mozi*, 1.38, and commentaries; Rickett (1998), 223.
18. I concur with Harper that this *xingjie* should not be equated with the *shijie* 尸解 of somewhat later techniques.
19. HY 1176, 7.8b; consulting Major (1993), 172.
20. The dating of the various strata of the *Taiping jing* has been the subject of much scholarly discussion, most recently in Hendrischke (2000), 143–45.
21. Wang is here quoting the *Huainanzi* passage discussed earlier.
22. This line refers to the teeth, which are to be ground together or pressed by the tongue in precise sequences throughout the ingesting of the sprouts (cf. 3.21a–b).
23. That is, one need not depend on the lunar cycle for planting and harvesting grains; one is freed from the strictures of the agricultural year.
24. Compare with a passage in *Baopuzi neipian*, 18. See also a passage in Mei Cheng's 枚乘 (d. 141 BCE) "Seven Stimuli" in which rich foods (literally "things sweet, crisp, oily, and syrupy") are warned against as being "rot–gut reagents." See Mair (1988), 26–27. I thank Victor Mair for bringing this passage to my attention.
25. HY 388, 3.21b–22a, departing from Kohn (1995), 101. As indicative of how inadequate it would be to speak of a single "Daoist" stance on grains, consider the passage quoted from the *Scripture on the Conversion of the Barbarians* in the Buddhist polemical tract *In Mockery of the Dao* (570 CE; see Kohn 1995, 100–01). Consider also the narrative in the early sixth-century CE *Taishang Laojun kaitian jing* 太上老君開天經 (preserved in HY 1425 and anthologized in HY 1026, 2.9a ff.; tr. in Schafer 1997), in which the divine Laozi descends and instructs Shennong on agriculture so that he may teach the people to sow the five grains as an improvement over hunting and slaughtering, and then again descends to show Suiren how to make fire for cooking.
26. The single line in Mei Cheng's "Seven Stimuli" is an exception, but the thrust of that passage seems to be that overly rich foods excessively consumed do harm, not that mainstream foods per se harm the body.
27. See, for instance, the texts cited in HY 1026 at 83.2b and 10b.
28. *Baopuzi neipian*, ch. 17; HY 388, fasc. 2; for a typical passage, see Campany (2002), 26.

29. This did not prevent offerings to transcendents in shrines and temples; but this practice represents an appropriation of transcendents by practitioners of sacrificial religion and was not something that advocates of transcendence arts approved (see, for instance, Ge Hong's attacks on sacrifice in the ninth chapter of his *Baopuzi neipian*).
30. *Baopuzi neipian*, 51–52; terms explained in Campany (2002), 35 and 88–89.
31. *Zhuangzi* (HY), ch. 2, line 14; Graham (1981), 51.

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CHAPTER SIX

A Taste of Happiness: Contextualizing Elixirs in Baopuzi

Poo Mu-chou

In Daoist religion, the way to achieve immortality, and with it, ultimate happiness, is to perfect one's moral righteousness, practice physical and mental exercises, and take various kinds of elixirs. Previous studies have examined the chemical elements involved in the production of elixirs and their physical effects on the human body (Needham 1974). This essay intends to take a further step and discuss the psychological effect of the drugs as described in the *Baopuzi* in the context of the social psychology of the Six Dynasties period. I examine the meaning of this attraction to elixirs in the context of the search for happiness in the history of popular religion. My tentative observation is that, in medieval China, a sense of happiness, once achieved through the help of ghosts and spirits, was now achieved through tasting elixirs. This change of mentality reflected changes in sociopolitical reality and social psychology, as well as the development of the art of medicine and alchemy in the Six Dynasties period.

The *Baopuzi*, the first text to discuss elixirs at length, reflects the culmination of two developments: on the one hand developments in medicine and physiology, on the other hand evolving popular ideas about the potential for universal access to immortality. As people recognized the physiological and psychological effects of drugs they interpreted these effects as a form of immortality. This identification of physiological effects with immortality integrated socially accepted ideas concerning immortality and thus created a new discourse about the search for immortality itself.

The Search for Happiness

It goes without saying that there can be no universally agreed definition of happiness. Still, when examining religious ideas expressing people's hopes and fears, there are common conceptions that could approximate a notion of happiness among a given community at a certain time in history. Yet such

personal expressions can only be gauged through indirect testimony, and this is particularly true of ancient societies for which fewer personal records of a textual or archaeological nature have been preserved.

As I have argued elsewhere, expressions of hope and the fulfillment thereof might serve as one indication for happiness, and hope might be measured by examining what people consider desirable in life. The other side of the coin, however, is fear and the aspiration to avoid misfortunes of all kinds. Achieving one's hopes and avoiding one's fears could arguably be identified as one way leading to a state of happiness. This definition remains flexible in that it does not dictate the content of hope, but only emphasizes its fulfillment, and it does not specify what exactly was feared, but instead addresses the avoidance of what was feared. In short, in order to detect changes in social psychology over time, it is necessary to trace the content of hope and the object of fear in time and place (Poo 2002).

Immortality and Happy Life: From Zhou to Han

Western Zhou bronze inscriptions provide some of the earliest expressions of the search for a happy life and do so in congratulatory expressions wishing for "longevity" (e.g., *mei shou* 眉壽, *nan lao* 難老), usually on behalf of the possessors of the vessels. Presumably, for the elite of the Zhou court, longevity was closely associated with happiness. Similar hopes developed in the Eastern Zhou period. Although the term "deathless(ness)" (*bu si* 不死) does not appear in bronze inscriptions (Xu 1936; Du 1995), other sources document aspirations for longevity such as, for instance, Duke Jing 景 of Qi's wish for deathless life, or the King of Yan's 燕 quest for immortality (*Zuozhuan*, 49.19; *Yanzi chunqiu*, 1.25, 7.180; *Han Feizi*, 11.201; Poo 1998, ch. 7).

By the late Warring States period, the idea of and desire for immortality appears to have been prevalent if we trust the author of *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*: "Nowadays rulers and nobles, regardless of whether they are competent or inept, all wish to live an eternal life" (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 1.7b). These references, one must assume, apply mostly to the upper echelons of society. Yet several intellectuals and masters of philosophy during the Eastern Zhou took an independent stand from the aspirations of the ruling elite. Han Feizi's criticism of the ruler of Yan's vain search for immortality and the *Lüshi chunqiu*'s skepticism of the prevailing fashion to seek immortality are two examples. For philosophers such as Zhuangzi and Laozi the discussion was carried to a different plane. Zhuangzi argued that happiness comes with the realization that life itself is but a part of the constant transformation of *qi* in the cosmos. Consequently a state of unhappiness contains within itself the potential for happiness and vice versa. A useless and crooked tree trunk or the deformed hunchback may be unhappy because of their "abnormal" condition, yet at the same time it is their deformity that safeguards their existence from destructive forces. Laozi propagates a similar idea: "It is on disaster that good fortune perches; it is beneath good fortune

that disaster crouches" (*Daodejing*, ch. 58; Lau 1963, 65). Happiness, for Zhuangzi and Laozi, is a state of existence that recognizes that the distinction between life and death ultimately makes no difference.

These philosophical arguments, however, found little sympathy with ordinary people in daily life. Unlike the elites, common people in the Warring States period, pressed by the immediate problems of daily life, had little room for speculation, and saw happiness in a more concrete fashion. Their perceptions of happiness are difficult to trace (Poo 2002), yet, the discovery of "daybooks" (*rishu* 日書) at Shuihudi and other locations over the last few decades, provides us with some clues. Daybooks contain information on the auspiciousness of dates assisting the user to optimally time his or her activities. While they have been studied mainly for their religious significance and social implications, they are also a potential source for our understanding of perceptions of happiness.

The subjects receiving most attention in these daybooks are issues such as sacrifices to spirits and ancestors, childbirth, marriage, farming, construction, commerce, and travel. Almost all aspects of daily life are touched upon: diet, clothing, hunting, illness, funerals, employment, military operations—even the catching of thieves and runaway slaves (Poo 1998, ch. 4). For the wise user of these daybooks, the correct choice of dates to carry out daily activities would guarantee a happy existence. Yet, its large menu of choices and combinations suggest that, then as now, there was no single concept of happiness.

The importance of daybooks and divination in late Warring States and early imperial China is partly reflected in the bibliographic treatise of Ban Gu's 班固 *Dynastic History of the Han* (*Hanshu*, 30.1775, 30.1781).[1] Although the *Hanshu* was written several centuries after the Warring States period, the information it preserves suggests that divination and day-selection were not only very much alive, but had developed further.

While daybooks might give us a glimpse into perceptions of happiness among the common people, it is worth noting that they do not mention the subjects of immortality or immortal elixirs. This suggests that, to commoners, the issue of immortality had not yet become a prominent or practical problem in daily life. Instead the way to achieve happiness, in the context of the daybook at least, was to follow the "open secret" of the auspiciousness of the days, in addition to seeking and receiving assistance from the spirit world. Although several Qin and Han rulers, most notably Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 and Han Wudi 漢武帝, actively searched for immortal elixirs—a quest that must have been widely known in society—the desire to take elixirs does not appear to be a concern of the commoner during the Western Han. Indeed, the record suggests that elixirs were thought to be obtainable only from faraway ocean isles or required a huge fortune to produce. A memorial by Gu Yong 谷永 to Emperor Cheng 成帝 (33–7 BCE) points out that the search for elixirs, promoted by court magicians, was a stupendous waste of resources based on unrealistic hopes (*Hanshu*, 25B.1260–61).

During the Eastern Han the idea of immortality gradually exerted more influence on the life and thought of the common people. This change of mentality can be seen in funerary texts, including so-called tomb quelling inscriptions (*zhenmuwen* 鎮墓文). The example below illustrates not only a family's hope that the deceased have a happy life hereafter, but also a wish that the descendants be protected as appropriate actions were taken to appease the deities in charge of human fate:

> May the deceased in the tomb not be disturbed or have fear, and stay tranquil as before. It is decreed that the descendants shall increase in wealth and number, without disasters for a thousand autumns and a myriad years. He [the deceased] is hereby reverently provided with a thousand *jin* of gold, to fill the gate of the grave mound. May the names (of the descendants?) on the roster of the dead underneath be eliminated, all other calamities be averted, and harmony reign among the people (?). May the essence of the five kinds of stone be used to secure the grave and to benefit posterity. Thus the sacred bottle is used to guard the gate of the grave, as decreed by the statutes and ordinances. (Ikeda 1981, 274 no. 8)

The sacred bottle refers to the clay bottle on which the text was written. The text and figurines served to provide the deceased and his/her family with happiness in the afterlife. The idea of deathlessness is articulated specifically in the expression "to eliminate the names of the descendants on the roster of the dead." This refers to the belief in a deity known as the Controller of Fate (*siming* 司命), and the possibility that one's life could be made immortal by urging the Controller of Fate to cross out one's name on the register of the dead. Another tomb-quelling text records that, once the deceased reaches the netherworld, he needs to report to the Controller of Fate:

> The heavenly messenger hereby reverently exorcizes the underground on behalf of the Jia family. . . . Report to the Controller of Fate above and the Controller of Wealth below, and to those [deities whose jurisdiction] the descendants belong to, and report to the messenger of the Lord of the grave to spread the message. Thus this lead-man (*qian ren* 鉛人) is employed to substitute for oneself. This lead-man is versatile, he can grind grain and cook, when mounting a carriage he can drive it and when grasping a brush he can write. (Ikeda 1981, 270 no. 2)

A "lead-man" or small lead figurine is usually found inside the clay bottle that carries the inscription. Both inscription and bottle belong to a set of tools for the deceased to ward off unfortunate events. The inscription requests the Controller of Fate to eliminate the names of the deceased's family members from his roster. The lead figurine serves as the substitute of the deceased for netherworld conscription labor that was expected of the

dead, functioning somewhat like the Egyptian Ushabti. Tombs in which these types of funerary texts were found mostly did not belong to people of high social status, but to the lower-middle echelons in society. This might suggest that whereas elites could afford to seek elixirs, those of the lower-middle echelon could only rely on the help of the Controller of Fate.

Aspirations for a happy life also occur in mirror inscriptions flourishing since the Han. These inscriptions can be seen as representing the hope of the user, or at least provided auspicious formula thought to bring good luck. An example:

> There is happiness daily and good fortune monthly. There is joy without (bad) events, fit for having wine and food. Live leisurely, free from anxiety, accompanied by flute and zither, with contentment of heart. Years of happiness are secure and lasting.[2]

The word translating "happiness" here is *xi* 喜 implying a sense of joy. The inscription portrays an ideal life, either in this world, or in the hereafter. Happiness is described as having plenty of wine and food, good music and leisurely time without the burden of mundane affairs.

At times the owner of the mirror was thought to be in the company of the immortals:

> If you climb Mount Tai you may see immortal beings. They feed on the purest jade; they drink from elixir springs. They yoke scaly dragons to their carriage; they mount floating clouds. The white tiger leads them straight to heaven. May you receive a never ending span, long life that lasts for ten thousand years, with a fit place in office and safety for your children and grandchildren. (Loewe 1979, 200)

Here the immortals are portrayed in a state of happiness, and the mirror owner presumably hopes to join in a never ending life with them. Happiness also includes an agreeable life for family members, particularly one's children.

The wish for immortality was also expressed in tomb paintings and reliefs during the Eastern Han. A widespread decorative motif of a feathered man has been identified as an immortal.[3] As a motif it appeared already in the late Warring States period, in stories connected with Han Wudi's quest for immortality, and on the painted coffin of Lady Dai 軑 at Mawangdui as well as in the tomb of Bu Qianqiu 卜千秋 (Sun 1977). Yet there they are all more or less related to the more exalted spirit realm. The fact that images of immortals start to appear on scenes from daily life, sometimes sitting on a rooftop playing chess, suggests that the idea of immortality began to gain some ground among the wider population. The appearance of images of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母) in many tomb reliefs, together with representations of divine mushrooms, moreover, indicates the deceased's wish to be in the company of the Queen Mother who dispenses

immortality. The increasing ascendance of the Queen Mother cult during the Eastern Han indicates a continuing popularity of the idea of immortality at a more popular level.

Tomb reliefs function as portraits of an idealised world where all sorts of exemplary actions of life were carried out. The banquet scenes, the chariots and horses parading the countryside, the receiving of guests, and the like are depictions of a happy life—whether or not it refers to the time when the tomb owner was alive, or when he/she was in the other world. Tomb reliefs and paintings prescribe a strategy for a happy life for the deceased—whether this happy life is on earth or below is another question. The inevitable question such iconographic and archaeological material poses is that of its representational value. What strata of society are represented here? Most mirrors were found in tombs of average sizes, perhaps belonging to the middle echelon in society. Tombs with paintings or reliefs were mostly also of average size (Poo 1993, ch. 6). Evidence does not allow us to construct a clear picture of what constituted an ideal life in the eyes of ordinary Han people. Yet funerary motifs of the upper-middle classes possibly reveal a common aspiration that might have been shared by the craftsmen who constructed and painted them.

The Eastern Han skeptic Wang Chong 王充 (ca. 27–97 CE), who denied the efficacy of immortality drugs, reported that during his time stories about the king of Huainan and his entourage of magicians still circulated. One story tells of the king's ascent to heaven together with his family members, his household dogs and his chickens that had eaten some left-over elixir (*Lunheng*, 24.317). In short by the late Eastern Han, the idea that elixirs of immortality were available to ordinary people was no longer exotic. Tomb protection texts, mirror inscriptions, and tomb paintings further indicate that, at least among the lower-middle strata in society, happiness in life was closely associated with a desire for immortality.

The Social, Psychological, and Medical Background of the Belief in Elixirs

How did people come to recognize that immortals existed and that elixirs could be found? One might expect that a ruler or nobleman would wish to prolong his comfortable life indefinitely, having the means to pursue immortals in far away places and experiment with elixirs. For the common people and lower elites, however, the logic is not so obvious. Claiming that people simply "believed" in stories about immortality and hence aspired to achieve it does not suffice. We need to examine the social, psychological, and medical background that, together, created an intellectual atmosphere in which such beliefs could fructify.

The sociopolitical turmoil during the transition from the Eastern Han to the Six Dynasties created an intellectual atmosphere that was skeptical in its outlook and averse to politics and social life (Yu 1980; Balazs 1964;

Hu 1989, 62–67). This stimulated a desire to liberate the mind, and, together with it, the body. Political instability led intellectuals to discuss subjects far removed from ordinary experience, often touching on the esoteric. Literati gathering in "pure conversations" (*qingtan* 清談) and the emergence of poetry on the theme of "wandering immortals" (*youxian shi* 遊仙詩) reflect this atmosphere (Li 1996).

Drug taking among literati of the Wei-Jin period has been explained as a response to the political and intellectual trends of the time: political chaos and instability discouraged literati from serving at the court and stimulated the rise of neo-Daoist thought and Buddhism (Wang 1953a). Together with alcoholism, drug taking has been presented as a kind of escapism from political pressures and intellectual frustration (Wang 1953b). While I broadly agree with this analysis, the socio-psychological and medical background underlying this intellectual climate deserves further analysis.

To gain some insight into the social psychology of the time we could begin by looking at stories about immortals. Many of the biographies of immortals in texts such as the *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 or *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 depict standard scenarios: a very old person with a young appearance is found, one day he disappears, and this prompts an explanation claiming that the figure in question is an immortal. Since ideas about longevity were no longer uncommon, one might assume that in these stories, longevity was purposefully or subconsciously taken as a sign of immortality. Tales about people of extreme old age reinforced the acceptance of a concept of immortality in the popular mentality. Several immortals indeed were ordinary people suggesting a "democratic" tendency in immortality seeking (Poo 1995).

To understand how the inner workings and efficaciousness of elixirs was explained we need to briefly review developments in medical thought since the Warring States period. *Yangsheng* ("nurturing life") had been an important strand of intellectual inquiry since the late Warring States period. The Mawangdui texts now entitled *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 (Methods for Nourishing Life) and *Quegu shiqi fang* 卻穀食氣方 (Methods to Abstain from Grain and Eat Qi) illustrate this tradition that emphasizes building up one's physical condition in order to avoid illness. Other texts in the Mawangdui medical corpus display an increasing interest in human physiology and ways to improve physical wellbeing.[4] The Han witnessed an upsurge in medical writings such as the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (*Huangdi Neijing* 黄帝内經) and Zhang Zhongjing's 張仲景 *Treatise on Cold Diseases* (*Shanghan lun* 傷寒論), and records about famous physicians such as Chunyu Yi 淳于意 and Hua Tuo 華陀.[5] Advances in the art of nurturing life stimulated the idea that life could not only be protected from diseases, but also prolonged. As knowledge of human physiology and medicine increased, the physical effects of drug taking became increasingly associated with the idea of immortality. Early advocates of immortality were experienced in the art of medicine, since an ability to cure diseases would be the first step toward achieving longevity and, ultimately, immortality.

When Ge Hong 葛洪 (284–343 CE) collected numerous recipes of elixirs circulating in his time, the general consensus was that certain plants or substances could help enhance certain physical conditions. A substantial portion of his information appears to have been derived from existing records. While not specifically identifying them as elixirs of immortality, a number of passages in the *Baopuzi* describe the effects caused by medicinal herbs:

> Han Zhong took sweet flag (*changpu* 菖蒲) for thirteen years and his body developed hairs. He intoned ten thousand words of texts each day. He felt no cold in winter, though his gown was open. To be effective, sweet flag must grow an inch above the surrounding stones and have nine or more nodules. That with purple flowers is best. Zhao Tazi took cinnamon for twenty years, whereupon the soles of his feet became hairy and he could walk 500 miles a day; also he became strong enough to lift a thousand pounds (*jin*). Yi Menzi took Schisandra seeds for sixteen years, and his complexion became like that of a jade lady. He entered water without getting wet, and fire without being burned. Chu Wenzi took yellow dock (*dihuang* 地黄, rhizome of Rehmannia glutinosa) for eight years. He could see in the night and emit light, and could pull a heavy crossbow by hand. Lin Ziming took thistle (*shu* 朮, rhizome of Atractylodes macrocephala Koidz) for eleven years. His ears grew five inches long and his body light enough to fly. He could jump across an abyss almost twenty feet wide. Du Ziwei took asparagus (*tianmen dong* 天門冬, root tubers of Asparagus cochin chinesis) with the result that he had eighty concubines, sired a hundred and thirty sons, and walked three hundred miles (*li*) a day. Ren Ziji took truffles (*fuling* 茯苓, Poria cocos Wolf) for eighteen years, then the immortals and jade ladies consorted with him, he could make himself visible and invisible, and he no longer ate grain. The scars on his skin had all disappeared, and his face and body glowed like jade. Ling Yangzi took bitter milkwort (*yuanzhi* 遠志, root of Polygala tenuifolia Wild) for twenty years and had thirty sons. He never forgot anything that he had read, and he could disappear at will. (*Baopuzi*, 11.208; Ware 1966, 195–96)

Most of these drugs were effective medicinal plants listed in later pharmaceutical texts (Unschuld 1986). Whether or not they were truly effective, it is clear that in Ge Hong's time those interested in medicine had gained a detailed understanding of many medicinal plants and their efficacy. This knowledge of medicinal plants or substances and the expectation that they could bring longevity laid the foundation for the belief in the possible existence of immortality elixirs. Moreover the concept of "nurturing life", according to which medicinal foods or drugs were taken as a kind of "supplement" to one's health, had become prominent in Chinese society. This suggests a connection between this tradition and the belief in the existence

of elixirs of immortality. The link between medical interests and the search for elixirs is well established by prominent figures such as Ge Hong and Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (ca. 452–536 CE), but it is also illustrated elsewhere. One example occurs in the story of Xu Qian 徐謇 whose medical skills lead to him being invited by the Wei court as royal physician. Charged with the responsibility to produce elixir for the emperor, he went into the mountains and spent several years without success before he abandoned the enterprise (*Weishu*, 91.1966).[6]

Robert Campany has pointed out—in chapter five of this volume and elsewhere—that the dietary habit or restrictions propagated by the adepts of immortality posed a structural opposition between a traditional/agricultural lifestyle and an otherworldly/naturalistic lifestyle: what the immortals or immortality seekers took as food was not ordinary food produced by agriculture and, by implication, "civilization" (Campany 2002, 21–30). These natural minerals and herbs were wild, raw, and generally grew in the mountains and were hard to reach. This structural explanation suggests that it were precisely those "unusual food stuffs" that were thought to contain some medicinal effect toward longevity.

The Feeling of Immortality Described in *Baopuzi*

Yet a belief that immortality could be achieved did not simply evolve because stories on immortals were circulating, or because advocates such as Ge Hong claimed that, with the proper methods, immortality was accessible to everyone. Neither can such beliefs be attributed solely to the fact that seekers of immortality possessed varying types of medical knowledge (Hu 1989, 266–81). I would argue that the belief in immortality was reinforced by the idea that certain physical sensations and reactions caused by drugs or plants—such as increased eyesight, bodily heat, and physical strength—were identified with the process of becoming an immortal. I develop this argument based mainly on materials found in the *Baopuzi*. We should differentiate at least two types of drugs: those with immediate effect, and those with effects experienced after a longer period. The possibility that medicinal plants, when taken over a long period, could enhance one's physical condition might have influenced a positive association between the real medicinal effect of certain drugs and the belief in the existence of elixirs of immortality. Elixirs with immediate effects tended to provoke reactions that were usually rather violent and dramatic, since these elixirs very likely contained certain poisonous minerals or chemicals. These reactions, nevertheless, were taken to be clear signs of a person's transformation into an immortal.

Physical Strength

A common description of the effect of elixirs was a feeling of increased physical strength. This is often expressed as a state in which the adept has a

sensation that the body becomes light. This light-bodied (*shenqing* 身輕) condition is manifested in several ways: the adept can walk or run tirelessly at great speed, or lift abnormally heavy weights. Numerous examples occur in writings from the Wei-Jin period. Wang Xizhi 王羲之, (303–379 CE) for example, wrote that after taking "five stone powder" (*wushisan* 五石散) the body becomes light and can move as if it is flying (*Quan Jin wen*, 26.273). *Baopuzi* contains numerous other examples. In one passage we read:

> (Adept) Qu therefore took pine rosin for a long time, his body became light, his strength grew a hundred times, and he did not feel tired climbing dangerous hills all day long. He grew to be one hundred and seventy years old, without losing any teeth or his hair turning white. (*Baopuzi*, 11.206–07)

Elsewhere the immediate effects of these substances are described:

> Taking "Yu's supplementary food pill" twice a day for three days will increase a person's strength and enable him to carry heavy loads on a long journey. One's body will become light and will not tire. (*Baopuzi*, 15.266)

Stories about ascensions to heaven following the taking of elixirs were widespread. These tales often describe trance-like sensations with the body becoming light and floating. This up-lifting sensation, most likely, was the mixed result of the stimulant and the hallucinating reactions of the body to certain plant or mineral substances (Needham 1974, 123–25). The recurring phrase "hovering about as if to become an immortal" (*piao piao yu xian* 飄飄欲仙), which could either refer to a psychological reaction or a physical sensation, describes this feeling quite adequately.

Body Heat

Drug taking could induce a sudden sensation of body heat, particularly when taking "five stone powder", also known as "cold meal powder" (*hanshisan* 寒食散)(Yu 1996; Li 2000). These sensations were often referred to as "powder emission" (*sanfa* 散發) or "stone emission" (*shifa* 石發). "Emission" symptoms caused the body to experience a heat sensation that emits from within, often so severe that one would want to undress and bathe in cold water even in winter. In severe cases this was accompanied by headaches and nausea, and followed by vomiting and diarrhea. Many texts strongly point out that these were unpleasant symptoms of chemical poisoning. Yet several texts insist that it was a necessary process to cleanse the body (Yu 1996). An early Daoist text explains the unpleasant physical reaction as necessary and not a cause for concern:

> After taking the elixir, you will feel that your body and face are itchy as if bugs are crawling [on it], and your body, face, hands and feet will swell.

> You will feel nauseous when you see food, and vomit if you eat, and you feel nausea and weakness in your limbs. You should not feel strange if you have diarrhea, vomit, have a headache or stomach ache, for these are the signs that the elixir is working and discharging the illness. (*Taiqing shibi qi*, 769; Wang 1953a, 1–5)

The *Baopuzi* gives another description of a heat-inducing drug: "Once one puts [the drug] in one's mouth, the body suddenly becomes hot, and all tastes become sweet and delightful" (*Baopuzi*, 11.198). Compared to the earlier passage, the symptoms here are rather mild. Some of the drugs taken as elixirs clearly produced real and unusual physical reactions that carried persuasive power. Sometimes these reactions led to unusual behavior. The idea that these were signs of becoming immortal provided an attractive explanation.

Eyesight

Besides an increase in bodily strength and a sensation of internal heat, another often mentioned effect of elixir taking is improved eyesight:

> Taking one *jin* (of the drug) will gain someone a thousand years. It makes the body shine with light, the dark place where he dwells becomes [bright] as if illuminated by the moon, and one can see in the dark. (*Baopuzi*, 11.198)

> When taking it for a long period of time, one's body becomes light-weighted and luminous, and appears as a moon in the dark, and when one takes it often, one is able to stop eating grain. (*Baopuzi*, 11.205)

Improved eyesight could enable a person to see the invisible, for example, the appearance of ghosts:

> Someone asked about the method to expel the hundred ghosts of the mountains and rivers and the temples. *Baopuzi* replied: "One should take . . . [various types of medicine], as they will allow one to see ghosts, so that the ghosts would be afraid." (*Baopuzi*, 17.308)

The effects of shining in the dark in a luminous state or the ability to see ghosts and spirits refer to a particular sensation of improved eyesight, possibly a form of hallucination. Several natural substances such as mushrooms or minerals were known for their hallucinating effects. These might have been connected to the practices of ancient shamans, or, in the case of the adepts, elixirs of immortality.[7] The real medicinal effect of some herbs or plants, including the famous medlar berries (*gouqi* 枸杞), of course, might also have helped to improve eyesight and hence promoted the credibility of other drugs in general.

A Better Personal Appearance

Certain drugs were alleged to rejuvenate the body. They would smoothen or brighten the skin, invigorate hair color or renew one's teeth (*Baopuzi*, 11.203). The improvement of one's outward appearance might have prompted literati to pursue the elixirs, since a display of personal charm and physical beauty were a fashion of the time. The famous Wei dynasty scholar-minister He Yan 何晏 (190–249 CE), for example, was known for his love of cosmetics and his pride in his handsome appearance. According to his contemporary Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282 CE), he was the first person known to have taken "five stone powder" to enhance his appearance so that "his mind became more clear and his physical strength improved" (*Zhubing yuanhou zonglun*, 177). He Yan himself insists that the reason he took "five stone powder" was "not only for curing illness, but also because it makes one's spirit become illuminated and clear (*shenming kailang* 神明開朗)" (*Shishuo xinyu*, 2.63). *Kailang* 開朗 "clear" was a favorite term during the Wei-Jin period to describe a handsome facial appearance, which, in this case, might have been related to a chemical reaction resulting in red cheeks or a white skin after taking the drug. The narcissistic search for male beauty prevalent among literati in the Six Dynasties period often insists on such appearance. Eulogies of the time often describe a person resembling a jade-person (*yuren* 玉人), an immortal (*shenxian*), or a deity (*shenjun* 神君), expressions that were a part of a general atmosphere glorifying immortality (*Shishuo xinyu*, 556, 563, 567; Wang 1953a).

Jade Maidens

One of the most extraordinary effects of elixir taking, however, was not the changing or enhancing of physical capacities or appearances, but the induced arrival of immortals and "jade maidens" (*yunü* 玉女):

> Immortals and jade maidens, ghosts and spirits of mountains and rivers shall all come and serve, and appear in human form. (*Baopuzi*, 4.75)

> The ninth elixir pill is called Cold-pill. Take one dosage and you will become immortal after a hundred days. Immortal boys and girls will come and serve you, and you shall fly lightly without wings and feathers. (*Baopuzi*, 4.75)

> After taking the drug for three years, the way to immortality is accomplished. It is certain that two jade maidens will come and serve you, and you can order them to work and bring on a "traveling kitchen." (*Baopuzi*, 4.79)[8]

Setting aside the problem of explaining these examples as either imaginations or visions, it is important to understand the social and religious mentality that could prompt these types of ideas. Jade maidens, often appearing

in later Daoist texts, were undefined immortal-like young female characters equivalent to courtesans or maids that often appear together with the immortals. The insistence that they "serve" (*shi* 侍), in my view, suggests that becoming an immortal implied achieving a status equivalent to that of an aristocrat "served" by his maids at court. In other words even the status of an immortal could not free a person from his desire to be served by others or satisfy a certain kind of vanity with a sexual overtone that catered especially to male fantasy. The coming of jade maidens and immortals could also be seen as partly the result of hallucinating effects produced by drugs combined with a psychological or subconscious desire for an aristocratic lifestyle.

Conclusion

Given the advances in medicine and pharmaceutics in early medieval China, certain plant or mineral substances taken as immortality drugs or components of elixirs were thought to be beneficial to the human body—just as the Chinese today like to think that black mushrooms reduce cholesterol levels, that pine seeds rich in vitamin E increase vitality, and that medlar berries rich in vitamin A improve eyesight. Medieval pharmacopeia list special "immortality drugs." These drugs were, at least partly, seen as preventive medicine and medicine to enhance health.[9]

While it might be worthwhile to verify the actual effect of the medicinal herbs and substances referred to as elixirs in the context of Chinese pharmaceutics, I would argue that the belief in the efficaciousness of elixirs was enhanced once the physical effects of these drugs were beginning to be noticed and interpreted as signs of immortality. To be sure the wording used in describing the effects of the drugs may sound fantastic, yet these were dramatic expressions, if not exaggerations, of certain physical reactions after taking the drug. Consequently, if a substance was able to produce certain physical effects that approximate a sensation of light-weightedness, muscle strength, excellent eyesight, and the like, it is not difficult to imagine that it would be considered an immortality enhancing drug. Likewise inedible or even harmful substances could then be considered as potential elixirs since they produced similar physical effects.

The concept of immortality evolved over a period of time and therefore covers a cluster of ideas often internally conflicting or contradictory in nature. Whereas original *xian*-immortality, as attested in *Zhuangzi*, referred to a spiritual existence with little mundane enjoyment or ambition, secular rulers and nobles conceived of immortality as a potential prolongation of life on earth with all its worldly pleasures. Gradually the notion of immortality became infused with material concerns and practical methods in the form of physical practices or the taking of elixirs. Once the idea of physical immortality became ingrained in the early Daoist belief system, materialistic ways to reach immortality, that is, the use of elixirs, became central to the discourse on immortality. This emphasis on physical immortality might have promoted the idea of using drugs to enhance health and to reach longevity.

Happiness, once achieved by appeasing ghosts, spirits, and ancestors, was now a matter of tasting elixirs, which occupied a central position in the development of Daoism in the Wei-Jin period.

Literati in the Six Dynasties period were certainly interested in prolonging life. Yet those Wei-Jin literati drawn to elixirs were not invariably convinced about the true efficaciousness of the drugs. Wang Xizhi, who came from a family associated with Celestial Master Daoism and was fond of taking drugs, still admitted that it would be "false to claim that life and death are the same, and that there is no difference between Pengzu and a premature baby" (*Jinshu*, 80.2199). To him immortality seemed probably still unreachable, as is reflected in his conclusion after searching far and wide for elixirs together with Daoist master Xu Mai 許邁: "I should finally die of happiness!" (*Jinshu*, 80.2102). Ji Kang 嵇康 ca. 223–262 CE states that "immortals are born naturally and [immortality] cannot be learned" and so the best thing one could hope for is to live a healthy life and rank among famous paragons of old age such as An Qi 安期 and Pengzu.[10] Many were likewise aware that certain drugs seen as elixirs often caused sickness or premature death, as is indicated in an anonymous poem from the Han period: "People take elixirs to seek immortality, yet many are ruined by the drugs" (Lu Qinli, 332). And Huangfu Mi for instance admits that taking *hanshisan* indeed had a certain effect in enhancing physical strength, yet that uncontrolled use would be nothing but disastrous (*Zhubing yuanhou zonglun*, 6.177–78).

Literati therefore could not ignore that immortality might be unattainable. Hence their writings muse about the passing of time, the inevitability of old age, and the inescapability of death. The urge to seek longevity was paralleled with a grief over the brevity of life. The late Han "Nineteen Old Poems" already contained many such ideas. By Wei-Jin times, these themes crystallized in the poetic genre on "wandering immortals" (*youxian shi*). Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263 CE), for example, coined the famous lines:

> Where could one meet [the famous immortal] Wang Ziqiao,
> Riding on clouds and flying over the woods?
> There is only the art of prolonging life
> That could sooth my heart. (Lu Qinli, 498)

The Liang poet Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433 CE), already writing in an environment filled with Buddhist influence, wrote another elegant poem lamenting the passing of time:

> I am not satiated with the brilliance of youth,
> Yet have already seen the movement of time.
> Lamenting about things in sorrow,
> grey hair drops like fallen stars.
> My passion relies on the drugs and elixirs,
> And swiftly weakness and illness are here. (Lu Qinli, 1161)

It is difficult to estimate the extent of the belief in elixirs in any given time and place, and how people experimented with drugs. The interest in elixirs mainly concerned elites since, apart from herbs gathered in the wilds, the making of "golden pills" required abundant resources. That is not to say of course that the wider populace did not aspire to obtain immortality drugs. The following anecdote serves as food for thought:

> In the time of Emperor Xiaowen of the Later Wei, many kings and nobles took the stone drug, and had the experience of "stone emission." [One day] someone who was not wealthy or noble had a fever, yet he also claimed that he had taken the stone drug and experienced an emission of heat. People despised him as pretending to have the body of a wealthy and noble person. Another person lay in front of the city gate, and complained about feeling hot, and people gathered to watch him. His friends found it strange and asked about it. He replied: "I am experiencing stone emission." His friends asked, "When did you take the stone, since you now have this emission?" He said: "The rice I bought yesterday from the market had stone in it. I ate the rice, now I am having an emission." Everyone laughed loudly. Since then few claimed to suffer from stone emission. (*Taiping guangji*, 247.1912)

Finally, even for elites and royalty, a taste for elixirs often lead to unfortunate results (Ho 1970, 316–39). After the Liang period, reports claiming that elixir taking was fashionable among elites are increasingly scarce although they did not entirely die out, especially in the Daoist tradition. Political and social circumstances, especially since the Tang, undoubtedly contributed to this decline. Likewise the success of Buddhism offered a new alternative to the literati's search for happiness, this time not by means of ingesting material substances, but from a perspective of the mind.

Notes

1. Among the 596 "schools" and 13,269 scrolls of books preserved in the imperial library, as many as 190 "schools" of divination methods and 2,528 scrolls of their "manuals" are mentioned, that is, a very significant portion of the extant writings in Ban Gu's time.
2. Ping Shuo kaogudui (1987). See also Kong (1984), 70; Karlgren (1943), 9–79, nos. 79–82.
3. Sun (1947). Finsterbusch (1966–71), vol. 1, nos. 16, 104, 118, 132, 143. For such figures on bronze objects, see Hayashi (1989), 146–52.
4. More specifically the texts known as the *Cauterization Canon of the Eleven Vessels of the Foot and Forearm* (*Zu bei shiyi mai jiu jing* 足臂十一脈灸經), *Cauterization Canon of the Eleven Yin and Yang Vessels* (*Yin yang shiyi mai jiu jing* 陰陽十一脈灸經), *Model of the Vessels* (*Mai fa* 脈法), and *Death Signs of the Yin and Yang Vessels* (*Yin Yang Mai sihou* 陰陽脈死候). For more on these texts see Harper (1998).
5. The bibliographic treatise in the *Hanshu* lists 216 volumes of medical writings, 274 volumes of medical recipes, 186 volumes on the art of the inner chamber, and 205 volumes that have to do with immortality seeking, presumably also including a number of medical works.
6. For a basic study of the making of elixir, see Needham (1974), Vol. 5, Pt. 2, 71–113.

7. See Wasson (1971), 80–92; Wasson et al. (1978); Kameda (1997). For a discussion from a psycho-physiological point of view of drugs enabling ghost vision, see Ishida (2000).
8. The "traveling kitchen" (*xingchu* 行廚) is discussed in Terry Kleeman's contribution to this volume.
9. The bibliographic treatise in the *Suishu*, in its section on "Medical recipes" lists, besides a text (in 10 scrolls) entitled "Medicinal Recipes for Immortality" (*Shenxian fushi yaofang* 神仙服食藥方) attributed to Ge Hong, 28 other scrolls with immortality recipes. See *Suishu*, 34.1049. Similar sections on immortality drugs are contained in the bibliographic treatise of the *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu*.
10. *Jinshu*, 49.1369. For An Qi, see *Shiji*, 28.1385, where he is referred to as an immortal. Although Pengzu was listed as one of the immortals in the *Shenxian zhuan* (Campany [2002], 172), here Ji Kang suggests that he was not an immortal but simply lived to old age.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Feasting Without the Victuals: The Evolution of the Daoist Communal Kitchen

Terry F. Kleeman

In her work among the Sherpas of Nepal, Sherry Ortner (1978) has shown that the relations of host and guest at a banquet provide a nexus through which complex transactions involving current benefit and future obligation can be negotiated. Similarly, Eugene Anderson, in his study *The Food of China* (1988, 16), posits for neolithic China a social structure centering on food, its sharing and distribution, that, he argues, is still characteristic of non-state cultures of Southeast Asia. Within these societies, he writes, "the most able settler of disputes and arranger of social affairs acquires much prestige and often wealth, validates his status by giving merit feasts, and eventually becomes the node of a redistributive system. He organizes feast and festivals for which others offer goods to be eaten or handed out." As Anderson notes, even today local Chinese leaders owe much of their status to this function of initiating and coordinating communal banquets and the banquet plays an essential role in the conduct of Chinese commerce.

Many other scholars have remarked upon the unique role of food, eating, and above all, the communal meal in Chinese society. Beyond the obvious importance of nourishment for the maintenance of life, the consumption of food and drink, and the sharing of this essential with one's compatriots, is invested with a deep ritual significance. The communal banquet reproduces the social order, provides a forum for the airing of grievances and the release of pent-up tensions among individuals and social groups, and, ideally, reestablishes social harmony. Through much of Chinese history it has had a further function, to restore cosmic harmony between man and the gods. The theological significance of the banquet lies in its close ties to the practice of sacrifice.

The Chinese faith is a sacrificial religion, based upon a reciprocal relation between, on the one hand, the gods and divinized ancestors who depend

upon the living for food and drink in the form of sacrificial offerings, and, on the other, the inhabitants of this mortal realm, who look to the gods and ancestors for blessings in the form of health, good fortune, worldly success, and personal happiness. Sacrifice and banqueting are two stages in a single process united by a common medium of nourishment. The sacrificial provender is first offered to the gods and ancestors, who partake of it and enrich it with their blessings, and is then consumed communally by the worshippers.

The combined practice of sacrifice and feast spans the length of Chinese civilization, forming the core of imperial cult practice, and is still the dominant form of interaction with the divine within popular worship. It did meet with challenges along the way, though, from Confucian theorists who sought a metaphorical interpretation of the sacrificial transaction, and from the institutionalized religions of Daoism and Buddhism, both of which rejected sacrifice as a practice (Kleeman 1994b). In this essay, I begin with a brief description of the archaic sacrificial tradition and some remarks on the Confucian reinterpretation of these rights, but will then focus on the Daoist response to this tradition, the communal feast known as the Daoist Kitchen (*chu* 廚).

Traditional Sacrifice and the Communal Banquet

Evidence for sacrificial ritual in China extends far back into the Neolithic. Mortuary practices of the Longshan culture, in particular, permit the reconstruction of a funerary rite involving communal drinking around the grave, with pottery vessels used in the rite discarded in the tomb (Liu 1996). Nonetheless, a fuller understanding of the function of sacrifice in Chinese religion comes with the appearance of writing in the Shang.

The Shang oracle inscriptions, dating roughly from 1250 to 1050 BCE, record in detail one aspect of the ritual life of the Shang court. These inscriptions are a mantic means of determining supernatural causes for everyday events and circumstances and testify to a world view in which the human world is shared with and largely shaped by a variety of supernatural forces, including the divinized ancestors of the royal Zi 子 clan, nature spirits associated with natural features like mountains and rivers, and a mysterious high god called Di 帝 ("thearch," perhaps originally from "the binder") (Keightley 2000). The inscriptions themselves seek to discover which supernatural agents were responsible for specific past events and how these forces will influence the near future. Having determined the disposition of these entities, the oracle then seeks how best to placate the unhappy party with just the right combination of sacrificial objects (usually animals, sometimes including human war captives) offered in the correct manner (there were many ways of killing and offering sacrifices) at the correct time (often according to the days of the cycle of ten celestial stems or *tiangan* 天干).

There is little direct evidence of the disposition of sacrificial provender after the completion of the Shang rites. Many words in the still poorly understood language of the inscriptions are understood to be types of sacrifices, and some, like the *liao* 燎 rite that we take to refer to a sort of burnt

offering, may have resulted in total consumption of the sacrificed goods. We do know that mass hunts produced huge amounts of fresh game and that prodigious amounts of meat were sometimes offered in a single sacrifice to a named ancestor. We also have rather unreliable accounts from the conquering Zhou that the last Shang emperor, Di Xin 帝辛, was given to lavish entertaining and banqueting, but he is also said to have neglected the sacrifices, so it is unclear if these were proper sacrificial banquets. There is a model for the post-sacrificial banquet in the *bin* 賓 or "hosting" rituals through which the Shang made offerings to the god Di. In these rites the royal sacrificer calls upon his deceased ancestors, in their exalted place in the other world, to make offerings on the king's behalf to Di, who is assumed to be too exalted to partake of normal sacrificial nourishment. All this evidence suggests that the Shang understood sacrifice much as later Chinese did and that at least part of the food offered to the gods also formed the nucleus of a subsequent feast shared by the king and a substantial number of people, however that group may have been defined.

We are considerably better informed about the subsequent Zhou dynasty. There are frequent references to both sacrifices and banquets in early Zhou materials, including the ancient poems of the Book of Odes, the speeches and proclamations of the Book of Documents, and the bronze inscriptions of the first half of the Zhou dynasty. In chapter one, Cook has shown how archeological and paleographic evidence can be used effectively to reconstruct aspects of Zhou sacrificial practice.

Although evidence for sacrifice during the Shang is ample, the Zhou in one of their sacrificial odes claimed that the institution of sacrifice had been created by their own clan progenitor, the legendary founder Hou Ji 后稷 or Lord Millet. He bears the marks of the legendary hero, having been miraculously conceived, delivered of a gentle birth, then thrice abandoned and rescued from danger (Raglan 1937). When grown, Hou Ji teaches the Zhou people how to plant grain, hemp, and gourds, then institutes the sacrifices. They are described as follows:

> Indeed, what are our sacrifices?
> We pound the grain then scoop it out,
> We sift it and tread on it,
> We soak it—swish, swish;
> We steam it in billowing clouds
> While performing divination and observing a fast
> We gather southernwood to sacrifice the fat,
> Take rams for the rite of expiation,
> We roast, we broil,
> To give a start to the New Year.
>
> High we load the *dou*-bowls,
> The wooden *dou*-bowls and earthenware *deng*-tureens.

The fragrance starts to rise
The Thearch on High in comfort savors it;
"How fragrant? How timely!"
Hou Ji founded the sacrifices,
Without fault or regret
They have continued down to today.[1]

This poem, which records the annual New Year's sacrifice, reflects the concern of the sacrificer that the entire ritual process be faultless, right from the initial preparation through the actual service. But however perfect he might be in ritual conduct, the ultimate success or failure of the rite depends upon the god's acceptance of the fragrant offerings. It is the response of the divine recipient, not the correct performance of the rite, that determines its success.

Another poem in the same collection, Mao 209, is usually understood to represent an ancestral ritual and is hence not a good model of early communal rites. However it provides more detail about the sacrificial process. This poem has been studied in depth by Martin Kern (2000), and I will not quote it here in detail, but there are several points worthy of note. First, this poem makes clear that the ritual process begins even earlier than is suggested in the previous poem, with the birth of the livestock and the planting of the seeds that will eventually supply the sacrificial meal. We also see a rare mention of the womenfolk of the household and their role in the ritual; in rites to the gods they must have played a similarly significant if unrecorded role.

Most important, Mao 209 describes the ritualized feeding of the possessed Personator (*shi* 尸) during the primary service and the general banquet that follows the sacrifice itself (Ikeda 1981, 623–44). The ancestors are represented by the Personator, a living descendant of the deceased who is possessed by the spirits and eats and drinks in their stead. Only after this solemn portion of the banquet is completed do the assembled spectators join in, dining on the consecrated food and wine. The correct performance of the rite, and the acceptance of the offerings as confirmed by divination or oracle, has won the sponsor blessings in the form of happiness and longevity. Because a portion of these blessings are infused directly into the sacrificial provender, they can be shared with those invited to the banquet. In fact, the felicity derived from the sacrifice was often shared on an even wider scale. It was common for a present of meat and wine from a sacrifice to be sent to vassals, associates, and rulers. In this way the supernatural support that each man derived from his exclusive access to his ancestors could be shared with others, thereby indebting them to the giver, and creating a sort of exchange system of blessings-imbued comestibles and other, unspecified favors that was vital to the operation of Chinese society at the time.

To give one example of the operation of these factors, let us consider the tale of Prince Shensheng 申生 of the state of Jin, who lived during the mid-seventh century BCE. This Shensheng was the eldest son of Duke Xian

of Jin 晉獻公 (r. 676–651 BCE) and his younger brother was the famous Chong'er 重耳, who traveled from state to state seeking support and eventually was established on the throne of Jin, ruling as the hegemon Duke Wen 文 (r. 636–628 BCE). Unfortunately, Shensheng's tale did not have such a happy ending, but it does permit us to trace the use of sacrificial offerings in several social settings.

The tale, as told in the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*, 7.252 ff.), opens with Duke Xian of Jin contemplating an attack on the neighboring Rong people. The scribe Su divines, announcing that the expedition will be "victorious but unlucky." The duke proceeds, capturing and bringing back to serve as his consort the beautiful Lady Li, daughter of the Rong chieftain. At the victory banquet, the scribe Su is given (sacrificial) wine in recognition of the correct first portion of his divination, but denied meat from the sacrifices because the lord still believes him mistaken regarding the second half of his prognostication. Lady Li insinuates herself into the duke's favor, gives birth to a son, and immediately begins scheming in order to displace the current heir apparent, Prince Shensheng, whose mother is already dead. When she has a confidante consult a high official about his position in the succession struggle, she arms her representative with gifts of meat and wine from her own sacrifices, but the official is so upset by her suggestions that he retires without having partaken of either; ultimately he agrees to remain neutral. Lady Li now springs her trap by summoning Prince Shensheng and telling him that the duke has dreamed of his dead mother. She counsels him to return to his own fief, offer sacrifice to his mother, and bring the sacrificial meat and wine as an offering to his father. When he does so, Lady Li poisons both meat and wine, then warns the duke and accuses Shensheng, who is driven to commit suicide. In this tale, every major plot development is marked by the sharing of the fruits of sacrifice. It is used to reward and punish officials, in an attempt to form alliances, and as an act of expiation intended to reconcile father and son, though that goes horribly wrong.

So potent was the charged meat and wine of the sacrificial altar that detailed rules were created in an attempt to control its production and use.[2] Access to gods and ancestors was strictly rationed according to social position, with the nobility of ascending rank having access to progressively more powerful spirits; commoners in these formulations had access only to their own ancestors and tutelary deities. Moreover, the offerings appropriate to each level of spirit were clearly noted, as was the periodicity of sacrifice (*Guoyu*, 18.564–65). Exceeding the specified amounts or frequency of sacrifice, or making offerings to unauthorized spirits, was prohibited as "licentious sacrifice." In theory, then, all consumption of meat and wine occurred within the strictly ritualized context of sacrifice and one's diet was determined by one's position within a theologically determined hierarchy.

Most of our evidence for this early period relates to the life of the nobility, and the sumptuary codes of the ritual handbooks often specify no religious activity in which common peasants were authorized to participate. Nonetheless, despite the limited resources, we can be reasonably sure that

something similar went on at the village level.[3] The village god of the soil or *she* 社, for example, came to be worshipped at festivals held in the second and eighth months of each year, and it was common to hold a village gathering at the end of the year, as well. In these festivals the community came together to pray for a successful agricultural year and to thank the gods for a bountiful harvest. Consider this account of the *she* festival in a conservative area of rural Guangdong province:

> When we used to erect an altar to the soil in the Rong-Gui area,[4] you had to plant a tree as the most important marker of the *she* and for this reason it was called the "*she* tree." Worship of the *she* in Rong-Gui follows ancient precedents. The day before the sacrifice to the *she*, the Regulator of the She (*shezheng* 社正) and the men of the *she* who were to participate in the sacrifice each observed a day of pure fasting, and slept face-up in their homes; only then could they sacrifice and worship. On the day of the *she*, all the neighbors would gather their relatives for the sacrifice. They slaughtered the sacrificial animals and built a hut under the tree. First the Regulator of the She would take charge of the primary sacrifice, then the people of the *she* would follow him in sacrificing to the god, and afterwards they would feast on the sacrificial meat. The meat that was offered at the *she* sacrifice was called "*she* meat" or "blessing meat." After the sacrifice, it is divided among each household. The wine that was offered at the sacrifice was called "*she* wine" and it is commonly said that it can cure deafness.[5]

A highly idealized account of this sort of local gathering is preserved in the ritual codes of the Warring States and Han periods, under the name "Village Wine Drinking" (*xiangyinjiu* 鄉飲酒).[6] According to these normative texts, all elements of the banquet, including the order of seating, the order of service, the number of dishes served to each attendee, and the number and order of toasts presented, were explicitly intended to manifest and affirm the local social hierarchy. In the "Treatise on Rites and Music" of the *Hanshu* (22.1028) we read:

> The ritual of the Village Drinking was created because there must be order in interacting with and receiving senior and junior. . . . If the ritual of Village Drinking were abandoned, then the proper ordering of senior and junior would be thrown into disarray, and lawsuits based on conflicting claims would proliferate.

The Village Drinking and the Archery Ritual (*sheli* 射禮) that often was paired with it were clearly important to the Confucian program of ritual reform of society, but there is little evidence that the Confucian form of these rituals was actually widely practiced. Sima Qian tells us, for example, that the Ru (scholars) of the state of Lu maintained their ritual program through the disorder and confusion of the Warring States and Qin conquest,

but that, “It was only with the rise of the Han that the company of Confucians were able to cultivate their textual studies and expound upon the practice of the Great Archery and Village Drinking rites” (*Shiji*, 121.3117). In the histories we find wise emperors repeatedly leading the people in performing this rite, but it is only in the *History of the Song* (1345) that we find a frank discussion of differences between the rite as prescribed in the ritual texts and as actually practiced (*Songshi*, 114.2720–21). There we read that the Song rite no longer retained the positions of guest and assistant, that different ritual vessels were used, and that the position of the participants had changed. This source differentiates three types of Village Drinking: those performed once every three years after consultation with local scholars to honor the worthy (*xian* 賢); those held when the village elder seeks out all the ghosts and gods and assembles the people to perform the rite in the village school “in order to correct their positions according to seniority”; and the rite hosted by the provincial chief (*zhouzhang* 州長) each spring and autumn in conjunction with the Archery rite.

Local ritual activity, led strictly by local leaders without guidance from the central government, is seldom recorded in early sources, but I think that we can see behind these repeated revivals of the literati rite, which is closely associated with office holding, a less formalized but more inclusive popular ritual that would have brought together all members of the community and renewed the local community’s ties with its divine protectors and overlords. We see just such a gathering portrayed in the twelfth century *Book of Transformations of Wenchang* (ch. 56), where a village elder uses such an occasion to make implicit criticism of one local official while praising another.[7] When the evil official seeks revenge against the worthy one at the next community festival, the village and regional gods, who are all in attendance enjoying their sacrificial repasts, intervene to save the good man and punish the miscreant. This shows how such periodic festivals could act as a forum for members of the community to speak their mind, a natural development from their function in reproducing the social order, but also reflects the active presence and participation of the village gods in the ceremony, an element elided in elite descriptions of the sociological import of the ritual.

Through such communal sacrifices and banquets the power and protection of the village’s god was shared among all its residents. It is for this reason that participation in such local festivals defined membership in the community and that outsiders were normally excluded from such gatherings, in spite of the normal demands of hospitality.[8] The hierarchical ordering in these festivals reflected the privileged access of village elders and influential individuals to the god’s blessings; it was through his (or her) protection and support that they had attained advanced age and high status.

Literati Criticism of Sacrifice

Although this pattern of interaction with the gods and ancestors remained the norm throughout Chinese history, it was increasingly called into question,

beginning at least in the Warring States period, by individuals unhappy about the implications of this interactive, transactional relationship for conceptions of deity, the sacred, and the nature of morality. Seeing the sacrificial relationship as tainted by its similarity to the system of personal favors and bribes that characterize the interaction of local officials and the governed, and perhaps inspired by increasingly complex legal codes and by evolving bureaucratic techniques to limit this sort of corruption in the government, some critics sought from the gods moral absolutes in the form of unvarying codes of conduct, enforced without partiality. Others sought to reinterpret the sacrificial relationship, arguing that the object of the ritual was an expression of reverence rather than the actual prestation of consumable foodstuffs.[9]

I have termed this movement Ethicization (Kleeman 1994b). I see it reflected in both the reinterpretation by ritual theorists of the sacrificial act as a symbolic expression of reverence, and in New Text School Confucian ideas of the resonance between human action and divine response, which interpreted natural events as responses to individual conduct. Xunzi (third century BCE), for example, maintains that one should "pray for blessings as if the deceased enjoyed the sacrifice, selecting, and sacrificing [sacrificial victims] as if the deceased tasted them" (*Xunzi*, 19.377). The Book of Rites makes a similar point, arguing for an interiorization of ritual that removes it from the realm of offering and blessing:

> Sacrifice is not something that arises externally; it emerges from the interior, having been born in the heart. When the heart is moved [by the thought of someone] one makes offerings through the rites. For this reason, only the worthy can exhaust the meaning of sacrifice. When a worthy man sacrifices, he will certainly obtain blessings, but they are not what the world calls blessings. His blessing is completion, which means being in accord with all things. (*Liji*, 49.1a–b)

Thus for the Confucian, sacrificial practice was revalorized by finding a new, moral meaning in the rite. For most individuals, however, the gods continued to be both real and similar to human beings in their needs and motivations. Lest one think that only nature spirits hoary with age or violent ghosts of the unquiet dead operated on this paradigm, consider the following story concerning the third-century occultist Guan Lu 管輅. He seeks to aid a Mr. Yan, members of whose family had been dying off young. Lu counsels him, "Go home and prepare clear wine and a catty of deer jerky. Then on a *mao* day (day 4 of the 10-day week), below the mulberry tree south of the wheat-threshing area, you will find two people sitting across from each other. Just pour the wine for them and set out the jerky. If they finish their wine, keep pouring until it is gone. If they ask you anything, just bow and do not speak. One of them should help you." Yan finds the men there playing chess and places the meat and wine before them. Engrossed in the game, they eat the offerings without at first noticing Yan as

he replenishes their jerky and wine, then the player on the north takes note and rebukes him saying, "What are you doing here?" Yan bows wordlessly. The man on the south said, "We have just been enjoying his jerky and wine. Do you feel no compassion for him?" The other answered, "The documents are already fixed." The one on the south asks to take a look at the document and changes his lifespan from nineteen years to ninety. Guan Lu later explains to him that he had met the Southern Dipper, who is in charge of births, and the Northern Dipper, who oversees deaths (*Soushenji*, 3.5a–b). These are not hungry ghosts but exalted astral deities who decide the fate of mortals, but in the popular imagination they can be bought off with a pound of meat and a jug of wine. The Daoists, who accepted the existence of these supernal entities, could not believe that they were so venal.

Daoism

One crystallization of the process of Ethicization was the emergence of religious Daoism in the second-century CE.[10] This Daoism is not the vague congeries of mystic doctrines and paradoxical folk wisdom derived from Warring States texts such as the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, but rather an organized religion complete with doctrine, eschatology, ethical codes, an ordained priesthood, and a well-developed body of ritual. It is a millenarian faith that, since its inception, has sought to overturn the Chinese religious world through a radical program of religious reform.

Traditional Chinese scholars had difficulty in replacing the old sacrificial order because it was part and parcel of the ancient world to which they looked for models and because it was enshrined in their canon, the Classics. The Daoists resolved this problem through the revelation of a new pantheon, superimposed upon the traditional pantheon of ancient China, and a new canon of revealed scripture. As has so often happened in world history, the former gods of state and popular worship were in a sense demonized. They were characterized as "stale pneumas" of the now superseded "Six Heavens." Whereas the offerings of flesh or "bloody victuals" (*xieshi* 血食) that provided the old gods with their sustenance and numinous power were for most expressions of piety, the Daoists condemned them as vile, corrupting offerings intended for blood-thirsty demons.

We find this position articulated in one of the earliest Celestial Master documents, the Xiang'er commentary to the *Laozi* written by Zhang Lu 張魯.[11] There we read:

> Those who practice the Dao will live; those who lose the Dao will die. The orthodox law of Heaven does not lie in sacrifice and prayer (*jizhui daoci* 祭餟禱祠). The Dao has prohibited sacrifice and prayer, and punishes them severely. Sacrifice involves communication with evil forces, so even if there is food or utensils leftover [from a sacrifice], Daoists will resolutely refuse to partake of them. (Rao 1956, lines 374–76)

We find more explicit condemnation of traditional sacrificial practice in later Daoist writings. The sixth-century *Ordinance Text of the Mystic Metropolis* (*Xuandu lüwen*, 22a) enjoins each ordained Daoist to prevent members of their flock from falling into apostasy by resorting to these practices:

> All Daoist Priests and Female Officers must prohibit the people from privately sacrificing to gods and ghosts, killing pigs and goats with words of sorcery and deluded talk. This is wrong. All are prohibited by the Dao. If there is this type [of behavior] it must be cut off. Those who transgress the code offend against a prohibition in their register. They will be fined one large counter.[12]

The new Daoist gods, by contrast, were pure pneumas of the Dao, without corporeal substance and with no need for sustenance. They concluded a pact with the Daoist community called the Correct and Unitary Covenant with the Powers, which was summarized in the Pure Bond (*qingyue* 清約): "The Gods do not eat or drink; the Master does not accept money." This put both the gods and the Daoist priests who were their intermediaries beyond the bounds of any sort of give-and-take relationship of reciprocity. Merit won through moral conduct, good work, and through proper ritual observance replaced the offerings to the gods.

These new standards were difficult to enforce because sacrifice and the ancestor worship complex in particular were so deeply embedded in Chinese social norms. Certain accommodations to popular custom were made relatively early in church history. Thus by the mid-fifth century we find a text, *Master Lu's Abridged Daoist Code*, that, while condemning popular sacrifice in harsh terms, did permit the faithful a limited amount of traditional practice (*Lu Xiansheng daomenke lüe*, 1a–b). Specifically, ancestral worship was permitted five times a year, and sacrifice to the gods of the soil and hearth twice, at the time of the equinoxes. There was, however, no provision for occasional sacrifices at the time of major events like births and deaths, nor could the seasonal sacrifices to the god of the soil perform their traditional function of bringing together and defining the community because their very existence was antithetical to the raison d'être of the community.

The Daoist Kitchen

The Celestial Masters developed a distinctively Daoist form of the traditional sacrificial banquet, which they dubbed the Kitchen (*chu*).[13] We should first note that this institution would seem to be only peripherally related to the "traveling kitchen" (*xingchu* 行廚). This was part of transcendent lore, not a ritual meal nor even a room for preparing food, but a magical picnic basket or canteen that was in fact a cornucopia of wondrous drug-foods that would assure fortune and long life. A variety of methods were developed to summon this wondrous canteen. The fourth-century alchemist Ge Hong had in his library a one-chapter *Scripture of the Traveling Kitchen* (*Xingchu jing* 行廚經) and

in the *Baopuzi* he describes elixirs that are effective in bringing the traveling kitchen to one (*Baopuzi*, 19.96). One involves placing a bead of elixir coated in rabbit blood in a "place of sixfold yin," which will result in the immediate arrival of a traveling kitchen accompanied by Jade Maidens (*Baopuzi*, 16.76). The canteen's contents are said to be sufficient to feed sixty to seventy people. Another, the Elixir Method of Wuchengzi, bears fruit only after three years of ingesting the drug, but it first fetches the Jade Maidens, who then have the power to summon the kitchen (*Baopuzi*, 4.18). This method, in addition to long life, imparts the ability to "suppress the hundred demons." The wonders available through the traveling kitchen would seem to have been comprehensive, for another formula promises that after obtaining it "whatever he wants will appear as soon as he mentions it; all the myriad objects of the world can be summoned."[14]

Belief in this sort of kitchen lasted at least into the Tang. The Daoist encyclopedia *Wushang miyao* (ca. 577 CE) records a method of invoking the Director of Emoluments (*silu* 司祿); after the invocation one need only maintain a fast for one hundred days and the traveling kitchen is sure to arrive, after which one can "ascend as a transcendent" (*Wushang miyao*, 25.4b). In a fascinating article, Christine Mollier (2000) has shown that this developed into a meditative practice of self-cultivation focusing on abstention from food that was adopted into esoteric Buddhism during the Tang and even transmitted to Mt. Kōya in Japan in the eighth century.

We must also distinguish a kitchen in the body, located in the Great Storehouse (*taicang* 太倉) or stomach; it is said to be the eating place of the various body gods and, more specifically, of the Three Augusts and Five Thearchs within the body.[15]

We should also take note of the Heavenly Kitchen (*tianchu* 天廚), which seems to be a permanent, fixed version of the traveling kitchen, a permanent horn of plenty for those who make it to heaven. The Queen Mother of the West is said to have presented a Heavenly Kitchen for Emperor Wu during their legendary encounter (*Yunji qiqian*, 114.12b). The utopian character of the repast is evident in the following injunction, which expresses the wish that all might live like the most fortunate members of society: "If you see a blessings feast, you should pray that everyone will eat their fill, that they will enjoy a Heavenly Kitchen for generation after generation, and that their virtue will flow to later people like water returning to the sea" (*Yunji qiqian*, 38.9a).

The kitchen that we will focus on is more mundane, but also more vital to the community as a whole. Let us first look at external accounts of this rite. They are surprisingly rare, perhaps because like the village *she* festival they were too common to attract literati notice. Ge Hong makes no clear reference to the Celestial Masters but he does discuss the kitchens observed by what he calls "the way of the Li family" (*Lijia dao* 李家道) and they sound very similar to the Daoist rite:

> There are more than a hundred of these ghoulish Ways; all kill living beings for bloody victuals. Only the Way of the Li Family practices

> non-action and is a bit different. But even though they do not butcher animals, every time they offer a blessing meal, there are no limits. They buy everything in the market, striving for bountiful extravagance. They have to buy the finest, freshest goods. Sometimes the kitchen is for dozens of people, and the expense is truly enormous. So they are not simply for purity and economy and they should also be listed among prohibited groups.[16]

Another account comes from the anti-Daoist polemicist Xuanguang 玄光 in his "Discourse on Identifying Disaster" (*Bianhuo lun* 辨禍論).[17] Early scholars of Daoism were too credulous in using such Buddhist polemical tracts and the claims made in them must always be understood to be the viewpoint of a hostile outsider; still, they can sometimes reflect opinions concerning Daoism not preserved in either canonical or historical sources. Here is what Xuanguang has to say about the kitchen:

> If there are remnant ethers from the Sinister Way, then [the Daoists] must perform an exculpatory kitchen at the gate to the tomb. Proud of their person and of their secret food, they maintain the attitude of one about to suck a boil (?). Of old, Zhang Lu held an exculpatory blessing [kitchen] in Hanzhong. He assembled a large group of libationers and demon troopers. They drank more than normal and ended up turning into a drunken mob. The ugly reputation from this incident spread abroad, reaching as far as Sichuan. Liu Zhang sought to teach them a lesson, saying, "Numinous transcendents who cultivate their life-force treat their bodies well by sticking to pine[nuts] and mist. If you are a glutton for tastes, how can you esteem the Dao?" When Master Lu heard this, he was mortified and determined to punish them by making them sweep the roads. Tales abroad in the world say that after this the Daoist priests established standards to forestall this happening again. They also set up regulations for the kitchen limiting it to three pints of liquor. Since the end of the Han they have been called "wine regulators." (*zhijiu* 制酒).[18]

This possibly apocryphal story is intended to explain why the Daoists permit wine at their banquets, wine being strictly prohibited in Buddhism, but set limits on its consumption, unlike traditional folk observances. The reference to the Daoist faithful as "demon troopers" is taken straight from historical sources and is not known in surviving Daoist literature, but the reference to the Daoists as "wine regulators," equally unattested in Daoist sources, has no obvious secular source and probably reflects actual popular usage during the Six Dynasties period. We can assume that the tale of Zhang Lu's boisterous kitchen, while perhaps not historically accurate, was an actual popular explanation abroad at the time of the Daoists' unique drinking custom.

Kitchens seem to have been employed in a variety of situations. There were both occasional Kitchens and seasonal ones. The occasional Kitchens

were to be offered in supplication, when requesting divine aid because of illness or other misfortune, or in thanksgiving, at the time of a birth of a child, a marriage, or other auspicious event. Another category of occasional observance was the Kitchen of Exculpation (*jiechu* 解廚), which was performed when an individual had committed some fault from which he desired absolution. It was such an exculpatory kitchen that Zhang Lu was said to have performed at the gate of a tomb to save the tomb occupant from otherworldly entanglements. It seems that the kitchen of exculpation was viewed as particularly difficult, or perhaps perilous to the officiant. The codes warn:

> When a Daoist Priest is to perform an Exculpatory Kitchen for someone, a man of great virtue must be chosen, a man of good heart. Do not employ one who is evil, refractory or lacking in propriety, or the exculpation will not obtain blessings. Those who transgress this code will be fined one large counter. (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 12.2a)

These ceremonies had their roots in traditional observances such as the Deliverance from the Earth performed for those digging tombs or otherwise disturbing the god of the soil.[19]

The seasonal observances occurred at the three annual Assemblies or Hui 會, held in the first, seventh, and tenth months. The Daoist officials assigned to each Oratory or Parish were required to offer a Kitchen according to the size of their congregation, although one source tells us that no officer should be responsible for a kitchen of more than twenty-four participants. These communal kitchens were to be supplied by annual contributions of grain and other goods (the famous five pecks of rice) that were the responsibility of each member of the church; one code condemns the recent practice of making a separate exaction upon the faithful for the supply of the kitchen. But individual members were also expected to offer kitchens at these times for at least five participants, unless they had suffered a net decrease in their household size during the preceding year. These Assemblies were also a time for Daoist officials to adjust their population rolls through reports from each family on births, deaths and other changes in their households. The rolls were of signal importance because they were reported to the Heavenly Bureaus, where they were used to adjust the celestial records on the basis of which one's fate was determined.[20]

Such Daoist communal observances also accompanied the performance of a major Daoist rite (*daochang* 道場). In principle this should be open to all local inhabitants who were willing to observe the rules of the kitchen. When an interlocutor asks how the local church is to support the ruinous expense of such a large kitchen, they are told to take turns acting as host.

Kitchens were divided into three grades, Superior, Medium, or Inferior, based upon the number of guests invited. Financial resources must have been an important factor in determining the size of the kitchen, but certain events were of such significance that they demanded the provision of a specific

rank of kitchen. Thus the birth of a son or a marriage required a Superior Kitchen entertaining at least ten individuals, while the birth of a daughter or a long journey needed only a Medium Kitchen for five. An Inferior Kitchen would be called for in the case of illness or a county-level lawsuit. There is some confusion about the number of participants, with another source listing ten as the absolute minimum in order to yield blessings, and more elaborate feasts including twenty-four, thirty, fifty, or even hundred (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 12.1a). No doubt practice varied over time.

Although kitchens could sometimes be very large affairs, the actual number of participants is less certain because certain attendees were worth more than others, so that, for example, a Daoist bearing the rank Correct and Unitary Equanimity Pneuma of the Left or Right (*Zhengyi zuoyou pingqi* 正一左右平氣) would be counted as seven normal persons,[21] a lesser Daoist Priest as three individuals, an ordained Daoist officer or soldier would be counted as two, and a Novice would be worth one and one-half, while only a layperson (*sanmin* 散民) would be counted as one.[22] Inviting high Daoist priests, we are told, had another advantage: Since they subsisted primarily on medicines and mists, they did not consume much in the way of traditional foods.[23] This feasting of high officials, called "Feeding the Worthies" (*fan xian* 飯賢) was justified in two ways: the high priests contained within them many body gods who must be nurtured, and the priests bore a heavy load of virtue, so they should be treated well.

What were the rules associated with these kitchens? We have a fair amount of information for this, although some of it is contradictory. We first notice that the kitchen is just one part of a ritual cycle including a period of preparation for the rite and a section thanking the supernatural participants. Thus the human participants are to observe a "pure fast" or *qingzhai* 清齋 for three days preceding the event, and the rite is to be followed by three days of a "statement of merits" (*yangong* 言功). The fast is said to involve both the dietary restrictions of the Kitchen itself and a purification of the heart through the confession of sin.

Another source speaks of an occasional kitchen offered by a lay member of the Daoist community in order to obtain blessing. Although the host here may have observed a pure fast leading up to the sacred meal, most participants are notified the day before and are expected to spend the night at the home of the host (*Laojun yinsong jiejing*, 13a–b). They are to arise at the cock's first crow and be arrayed at their seats ready for the kitchen by the time the sun has fully emerged. A kitchen for a departed individual (i.e., an exculpation kitchen) must not last past midday.

As to the items consumed at a kitchen, we are told at one point that it is the same as the food of a fast, and elsewhere that it must not include either *hun* 葷 ("impure") or *hui* 穢 ("defiled") items. This is generally understood to prohibit both the "five sharps" (garlic, onions, etc.) and meat. There is evidence that the Daoists, unlike Chinese Buddhists, were not in general vegetarians, refraining only from the consumption of specific animals like those associated with the year of one's birth, but it seems clear that meat

was eschewed in the kitchens.[24] The *Text of the Ordinances of the Mystic Capital* reports:

> Recently the many officials have been killing and cooking domestic animals to supply the Kitchens and Meetings. This is not in accord with the otherworldly law. To kill the living in search of life is to have departed far from life. The misfortune will reach to later generations and the celebrant will be fined one large counter [i.e. three years]. (*Xuandu lüwen*, 15a)

So abhorrent was killing to the Daoists that even the mention of violence is tabooed at these observances. Another source tells us, "All must visualize in their hearts the Most High. They are not permitted to speak of the killing of living beings, hunting, fishing, or trapping. If this code is transgressed both host and guest will suffer the torture of illness for three years" (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 12.2a.7–9).

As we can see just from these two quotes, the conduct of one of these kitchens was a solemn affair, dedicated to the creation of merit, but fraught with peril for anyone who would disobey the rules. Not surprisingly, the unfailingly bureaucratic Daoists had appointed officials in charge of various aspects of the rite. According to the *Code of the Thousand Perfected* (*Qianzhen ke* 千真科), enforcement of these detailed strictures was in the hands of a figure known as the Supervisor of the Kitchen (*jianchu* 監廚), who was aided by a Regulator of the Group (*jiezhong* 節眾).[25] The position of Supervisor required special qualities: "In going up to the fête and proceeding to eat, one must be careful about the rules. Whether sipping soup or holding a bowl one's ritual deportment must be complete" (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 9.9b.1).

Before the meal commences, the Supervisor examines the food, assessing the balance of raw and cooked and their flavors, and arranging them in an appropriate order. He then checks the gnomon (or a waterclock, if it is cloudy) to see if the starting time, probably noon, has arrived.[26] If so, the Regulator of the Group sounds a bell to summon all to eat and each participant sends in his eating implements. After determining the seating arrangements, the Supervisor intones a Vow, and everyone takes his or her seat. After a round of water, the meal commences, all according to rank. We know from another source that precedence is determined by the rank of one's Daoist register, then by the date on which one received that register, and only after that by age. This parallels the rules of precedence at the Village Drinking, where official rank is the primary determinant, followed by years in that rank, followed by age.

The Supervisor of the Kitchen first kneels before the seat of the Former Master (*xianshi* 先師), perhaps referring to an empty seat reserved for the founder of the Celestial Masters, Zhang Daoling. After the Regulator sounds a chime, the Officiant (lit. "One of Great Virtue," *dade* 大德) at the

head of the table offers this prayer:

> We present this fête for the Perfected of the Dao and for the race of Daoists (*Daozhong* 道種), that the Dao Father, Dao Mother, the Perfected, the Divine, the Transcendents and the Sages, or those who with them pursue the Dao may eat and drink together. May they have long life without limit! (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 9.10a.9–10)

The plates are first presented before the table of the Former Master, then to the Fête Officials (*zhaiguan* 齋官, presumably the Supervisor, the Regulator, and the Officiant). Those distributing the food chant the name of each fruit, dish, or grain in a low voice as they circulate through the hall. Each participant holds up his vessel to receive the food, and takes food only if he needs it. The Officiant of Great Virtue is responsible for seeing that the food makes it all the way down to the last participants, although individual participants are also warned about keeping the passed dishes too long, and those in the higher ranking seats, who get served first, are urged to think about those who come after them and not take too much (9.12a.5–7). When the distribution is complete, the Regulator of the Group sounds his chime and intones: "Please eat" (*qing jiushi* 請就食).[27]

The actual consumption is a quiet, no-nonsense affair. All sit up straight, with no talking or laughing, as they begin to eat. The meal proceeds with no smacking of lips, no slurping of soup, no spitting, no burping, and no clacking of spoon or chopsticks. No participant may ask for food before it reaches him and only the Supervisor can make requests of the kitchen staff. When all have finished eating there is one round of alcoholic drinks and one round of water, then the chime sounds again and the Regulator chants, "The fête meal is complete." The attendees then file out and the Officiant carries out each of the food vessels in order, then retires to his room to wash his hands and rinse his mouth. The Supervisor watches all this carefully and each person must exit. If anyone breaks any of the rules, he must face the group and bow twenty times.

The distribution of leftovers was clearly a concern. The grain was distributed to everyone, but normally the fruits reverted to the host. In order to avoid dissention, the excess fruits were placed in front of the Supervisor of the Kitchen and the Regulator of the Group intoned three times, "I announce to everyone. These leftovers from the fête will be supplied for the unrestricted use of the host. Those who agree, keep silent. Those who disagree, say so" (9.11b.1–2). Then anyone among the fête officials who had a father, mother, master, aged or infirm member of his family might claim some of the fruit by rising and stating this fact. This provision recognizes the primary claim on the food by the host who supplied it but also makes provision for other needy members of the community.

A notable feature of the early Daoist church was institutions of public welfare that were not limited to members of the community. The Charity Huts (*yishe* 義舍) of the original Hanzhong community, which provided

meat and wine to hungry passersby, are a good example of this, though it is uncertain to what degree they continued after the forced dissolution of that community in 215 CE. It is not surprising that the regulations for the Daoist Kitchen contain two provisions relating to the feeding of those not of the community. The first is the "Rice of Shennong." Each participant is told to set aside seven grains of rice for the masses in honor of Shennong, who first tasted all the plants and determined which were edible. Like the loaves and fishes of the Sermon on the Mount, these grains have magical properties and it is said that each grain could feed one commoner for one thousand days. A series of chants, to be recited while selecting (and collecting?) the grains, may be the key to this extraordinarily nourishing food.

The second passage is a discussion about what to do about outsiders who happen to arrive during the course of the Kitchen:

> If some of the profane come during a fête begging for food, the Supervisor of the Kitchen must ask them if they can observe the fête or not. If they observe the fête, give them food. If they cannot observe the fête, he should explain to them in detail the workings of karma so that they know the source of sin and blessings. This is not because one begrudges the food, but in order to make them reflect and understand. To reverently observe the Way of the Dao is the number one mercy. If you do not reveal these words, the masses will accumulate sins. (*Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 9.13b.2–5)

This last passage reveals the didactic element in the Daoist kitchen. It was an institution created and practiced to lead men away from the profane worship of demonic beings to the true religion of the Great Dao. It is unclear if "observing the fête" meant merely agreeing to abstain from meat and regulate their consumption of wine, or if it meant more broadly observing all the rules of conduct associated with the ceremony and joining in on the invocations and prayers. We have already noted the responsibilities of the Daoist priest in maintaining the fundamental non-sacrificial and vegetarian character of the feast.

The Daoist kitchen, then, was a response to the traditional sacrificial banquet. It produced blessings for its participants, effected a limited redistribution of wealth, and renewed the ties of community. But the hierarchy it reproduced was a Daoist order of merit, not the traditional one of age and status. Moreover, though the gods joined in the meal and a place was set for the sect founder, like the high representatives of the church, the gods did not really need such gross provender and hence were not defiled or otherwise compromised by accepting it.

It would seem that the Daoist Kitchen did not enjoy a particularly long history. There are few references to it after the sixth century. In a sense it can be said to have been subsumed within the Daoist Offering or *Jiao* 醮, which always ends with a banquet. It is also true, however, that the sort of Daoist community characteristic of its early history, with a parish priest who

diligently ministered to and kept records of his flock, seems to disappear about this time; in late imperial China, the Daoist priest was but one of a large corps of competing religious specialists. Daoism increasingly came to an accommodation with popular religion that permitted traditional village feasts and the Daoists' pure ritual observances to coexist. Still, for the period of its currency, the Daoist Kitchen provided an important alternative to the profane feasts of the popular pantheon. It was a uniquely Daoist repast.

Conclusion

Having set out the Daoist Kitchen in as much detail as is possible given existing resources, let us turn to a consideration of the rite in the context of Chinese ritual history. I have noted that the Kitchen draws from two related traditions, the popular festivals held in commemoration of the god of the soil in traditional Chinese communities, and the Village Drinking ceremony, a Confucian transformation of this popular observance that emphasizes Confucian concerns with social order. The early Celestial Master church emphasized its roots in the local community and its ties to this specific ritual by calling their priests Libationers (*jijiu* 祭酒), a term that originally referred to the elder who performed the libation of wine at the opening of the banquet for the God of the Soil. It is not surprising that the Daoist kitchen is a true communal rite, involving all members of the community and even outsiders in a limited role, rather than a meeting of the local gentry as is the case in the Village Drinking. I assume that this poorly documented village rite shares some of the goals of the Confucian, including a symbolic recreation of the social order through the systems of privileges and prejudices expressed in the banquet.

There are significant ways in which the Daoist Kitchen reveals its links to the Village Drinking rite, as well. The traditional rite would seem to have emphasized age as the primary determinant of status, and traces of this remain in the Village Drinking, wherein the number of dishes offered to each guest is based upon his age, without regard to official or social rank. In the Village Drinking, however, the principle of bureaucratic rank takes precedence, followed by time in rank, and age is only of tertiary importance. The Daoist rite substitutes Daoist rank for official position but otherwise maintains a parallel hierarchy; secular social status and official position is explicitly rejected as irrelevant (*Xuandu lüwen*, 13b; Stein 1971, 437).

The Village Drinking differs from the traditional banquet to the god of the soil in its emphasis on selecting and honoring a worthy individual (*xian* 賢). This was done in consultation with the local schoolteacher and was a way of promoting a promising local notable for government office; during the Han it may have been considered part of the process of recommending local people for office under categories like Worthy and Excellent (*xianliang* 賢良) or Upright and Correct (*fangzheng* 方正). Although the Daoist institution plays no role in recruitment or promotion within the church, it shares with the Village Drinking rite a focus on noting and celebrating the

most morally excellent individuals in the local community. This is evident in an alternate name for the Daoist rite, Feeding the Worthies. The emphasis placed upon hosting high officials of the church, who are assumed to possess an unusually great store of virtue, also reflects a likely influence of the Village Drinking rite, which selects one worthy individual from the local community to act as the formal recipient of the ritual.

The Daoist Kitchen can also be seen as a transitional development in the evolution of Daoist ritual. By the late Six Dynasties period the banquet itself was part of a seven-day ritual, including a three-day preparatory fast and a three-day ritual to thank the spirits involved in the banquet. We have here, then, the basic structure of the later, multi-day rite of cosmic renewal. In fact, both *zhai* and *jiao*, the two primary terms used to refer to these major Daoist rituals, have as one of their meanings a sacrifice and its associated banquet. Thus the complex of activities surrounding the Kitchen did not so much disappear as transform into the modern *jiao* (Stein 1971, 432).

Given this trajectory, it is interesting to consider the custom of the Rice of Shennong in the context of the evolution of Daoist ritual. One of the most significant turning points in this process was the Lingbao acceptance, ca. 400, of a larger ultimate goal for the rite, an aspiration toward universal salvation of all sentient beings rather than those few actively participating in or sponsoring the ceremony. The Rice of Shennong may be seen as a transitional phase in this development, a time when Daoism was slowly transforming from an isolated group of individuals outside normal Chinese society, anxiously awaiting an impending apocalypse and hoping to see a future utopia, to an element of broader Chinese society, taking all living beings as its concern and aspiring to renewal on a cosmic rather than community level.

Looking at the larger canvas of Chinese religious history, we can see a process of ritual refinement and transformation that responds both to changes in moral sensibility and the historical evolution of Chinese society. We begin with a village rite that expressed the solidarity of the local community, united in its worship of a local divine figure and sharing his or her protection and blessings as they shared food from the communal feast. This tradition continued, but was also adapted into and transformed by exponents of Confucianism and Daoism.

Members of the Confucian tradition, as experts, preservers, and practitioners of ritual, played an important role in the evolution of Chinese ritual. Confucius asserted that one's bearing and mental state during the performance of ritual was essential for its effectiveness. Moreover, he established a moral prerequisite, benevolence, for participation in the rites. His followers elaborated these positions as they performed and directed rituals over the next several centuries. The Book of Rites, which took final form in the early Han, is the culmination of this trend. There, amidst detailed instructions for the performance of a variety of rites we find the idea that the true significance of ritual is as a type of self-cultivation which improves and enriches the moral nature of the officiant and observers.

The Daoist kitchen is an outgrowth of moral reflection upon traditional religious practice. Daoists, like the Confucians, rejected the transactional character of the traditional sacrificial banquet because of its implications for the nature of deity. But where the Confucians had interiorized the sacrificial experience, the Daoists transformed it by stressing the aspect of communion with divine beings, who continued to participate physically in the feast through a representative who embodied the First Master much as the Dead One once embodied the deceased ancestor in ancestral rites. The rejection of the sacrifice of animals, "to kill the living in search of life," coincided with a major concern of Buddhism, but had its own rationale within Daoist doctrine. It marked a significant departure from traditional practice and conveyed an implicit criticism of that practice.

The Daoist Kitchen maintained its ties to the traditional banquet, and diverged from the Village Drinking rite, in its inclusiveness. The Village Drinking focused narrowly on the elite of the community and relegated commoners to, at best, a marginal role. The emphasis on "feeding worthies" in Daoism reflects a parallel tendency, but the Daoist rite never abandoned the original function of the village sacrifice to the god of the soil as a communal rite bringing everyone in the village together. The opening of the Kitchen to anyone who was willing to observe its regulations and the Rice of Shennong that provided for all who could not attend the feast also reflect attempts to maintain this ideal in the context of Daoism as an organized national and cosmic religion. As membership in the Daoist community expanded beyond the locality-based parish to systems of organization based on astrology and as liturgical lineages developed that transcended spatial limitations, Daoist ritual transformed as well. Eventually the lowly village kitchen would become a cosmic rite of renewal that would revitalize all members of a larger, translocal community as Daoism evolved into a salvific world religion. I hope, with this essay, I have offered a glimpse of the changing moral vision and worldview that was at the root of this transformation of Chinese ritual practice.

Notes

1. Mao 245, *Mao Shi zhushu*, 17A.16b–19b; cf. Waley (1996), 246–47. See also Riegel's translation in Mair (1994), 165.
2. *Liji* ("Wang zhi"), 12.16a–b; cf. *Liji*, 5.17a ("Quli"), 46.8a–b ("Jifa"). "Wine" in this context actually refers to a grain-based strong beer like modern Japanese sake.
3. On the early history of the cult to the god of the soil, see Chavannes (1910), 437 ff.
4. Rongqi and Guizhou are two adjacent villages in the Pearl River delta near Shunde, about 50 kilometers south of Guangzhou city.
5. See http://www.sc168.com/citylife/.%5Cje%5C200312140022.htm (as on 30.10.04). This account, in simple classical Chinese, is clearly a recollection of traditional practices rather than a record of current observances, but it reflects those elements of the local ceremony that modern informants thought most important.
6. See in particular the chapter of the *Yili* entitled "Village Wine Drinking Ritual" (chapter four). The *Liji* chapter on the rite discusses its significance but does not treat the actual ritual

procedures in depth. As described in these texts, the rite focuses on a local notable, the host (*zhu* 主), who consults with the local schoolteacher on selecting a worthy local to be the primary recipient of the rite or the guest (*bin*) as well as another worthy individual to act as his second or assistant in the rite (*jie* 介). The rest of the community is characterized as the "many guests" and has only a secondary role in the rite. In some interpretations only three individuals represent the many guests in those rare segments where they play a role. I assume that in less formal village rites the locals who attend have a more central role.

7. *Zitong dijun huashu* 梓潼帝君化書 (HY 170), 3.9a–11a; Kleeman (1994a), 239–42.
8. Schipper (1977) argues that the communities defined by individuals who participate in a common sacrifice and banquet for the local earth god are the basic building blocks of Chinese traditional society.
9. See in particular the "Jiyi" 祭義 ("Meaning of Sacrifice") chapter of the *Liji*.
10. On the founding of the Daoist church see Bokenkamp (1997), 1–185; Kleeman (1998), 61–66; Ōfuchi Ninji (1991); Sawa Akitoshi (1994).
11. On the Xiang'er commentary, its dating and authorship see Bokenkamp (1997), 29–77.
12. See also page 5a of the same document, which prohibits the consumption of food left over from sacrifices to profane gods: "You must not eat a meal at sunset or the food from sacrifices to the gods. This is in contravention of the statues and you will be penalized counters equal to one thousand days."
13. Rolf Stein focused on the kitchen in his seminars of the early 1970s, and seems to have explored the topic quite deeply, but only published a summary of his results. See Stein (1971, 1972); Mollier (1999–2000); Chen Guofu (1963), 325–26.
14. *Baopuzi*, 4.17. This kitchen is summoned by mixing a black elixir with water, then painting it on one's left palm.
15. *Yunji qiqian*,18.8b–9a, 15a. There are also two protector deities of this kitchen, stationed at either side of the mouth (18.16b).
16. *Baopuzi*, 9.39. Campany (2002, 213) has suggested that "the way of the Li family" may in fact refer to the family of Li Te and Li Xiong, who established a Daoist state in Sichuan in the early third century.
17. Not much is known about the author of this treatise, but it is comparatively early, dating to around 500 CE. Kohn (1995, 169–70) claims, "Among the early texts, the *Bianhuo lun* is most concrete, because it deals with the actual situation of Taoism at the time." The passage quoted below would not seem to bear this out.
18. *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 2102.T.52.49a.
19. Recorded both in transmitted texts like the *Lunheng* of Wang Chong and in grave-quelling documents unearthed from Han tombs in recent years. On release from culpability in grave-quelling documents, see Seidel (1987).
20. *Yunji qiqian* (9.11a) mentions a now lost *Scripture of the Nine Elementals* that reportedly "discusses how to summon demons and dispatch sprites and how to conduct a kitchen to test the *hun* and *po* souls." This suggests that the kitchen played a significant role in determining one's fate.
21. On the organization of the early church hierarchy see Sawa Akitoshi (1994).
22. *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 12.1b, citing an unspecified Ordinance.
23. There seems to be a certain ambivalence concerning these exalted personages. The *Code of the Great Perfected* is quick to point out that these beings subsist on elixirs and drugs, hence they have no need of rich profane food, but that others want to feed them to extol their virtue. Perhaps we see here a certain embarrassment at the rather obvious way these codes were crafted to assure that the priesthood was well fed. See *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 12.1a.
24. See *Yunji qiqian*, 19.9a, where a Giant of the Nine Heavens warns the faithful that they should not eat flying birds, which are birthed by Heaven, or wild animals, but can butcher and eat the six domestic animals as long as one avoids the animals associated with each on the six *ding* days (day four of the week, ruled by the female counterparts of the six *jia* or *yang* spirits.).
25. The following description is based upon the account in *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 9.10a ff, which quotes the *Code of the Thousand Perfected*.
26. Although originally a Buddhist regulation, Daoists by this time seem to have adopted the custom. The *Shengxuanjing* 昇玄經 says: "After midday, you must not eat anything having 'grain

pneumas.' " A number of drugs are specifically excluded from this prohibition. Another *Scripture of Essential Teachings* 旨教經 says, "Early in the morning one eats gruel and there is one meal at noon. After this, water must not pass the teeth." See *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 9.12b.5–9.

27. There is a note in the text about those who arrive after the food and drink has been distributed and the fête has already begun. Such guests must eat below the hall and if they force their way into the hall, they are called "accidental eaters" (*chushi* 觸食); they should leave as soon as they have eaten their fill, even if the mass of diners has not yet finished.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Pleasure, Prohibition, and Pain: Food and Medicine in Traditional China

Vivienne Lo

What did the eighteenth-century poet and epicure Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716—1797) mean about the *qi* of food when he stated:

> the eyes and nose are neighbors to the mouth and are the mouth's matchmaker. When fine savory dishes fill the nose and eyes, the colors and aroma are quite different: some are clear like autumn clouds, others captivating like amber. Once the fragrant *qi* has already leapt to the nose there is no need to wait for teeth to bite or tongue to taste to appreciate their subtlety. So if you wish to dazzle, glaze with crystal sugar. Do not use spices for a delicate flavor, [with elaborate seasoning] *wei* 味 "flavor" is destroyed. (*Sui yuan shi dan*, 11)

What was meant by the *qi* of a food that conveys these magical qualities of a dish, so that it resembles autumn clouds or amber? In what sense was Yuan Mei concerned about the taste of his savory dishes? In chapter two, Sterckx identified the *qi* of a food in early Chinese sacrificial literature as transcending flavor: tasteless and insipid food offerings have *qi* and nourish the most remote ancestors. While these ancient, flavorless offerings, such as boiled meats and grain, may not have had the same culinary finesse as Yuan Mei's lightly spiced delicacies in the eighteenth century, they share a concern to minimize seasoning in order to enhance nutritional effect. That heavy-handed spicing spoils food is the kind of commonplace culinary wisdom that exists at the boundaries of food and medicine. But discourse about the nutritional potency of flavor in Chinese literature has a complex history that requires more complete consideration of texts devoted to pleasure, prohibition and the treatment of illness. The codification of foods and flavors in early China began with religious offering and sacrifice in the late Warring States and early imperial period. When and to what extent that codification then crossed the boundaries of *haute cuisine*, medicinal foods (*yao'er* 藥餌), and drugs is central to the theme of this chapter.

While the term *wu wei* 五味 (the five flavors) may refer in a general sense to the pleasures of eating, medical historians have preferred to translate *wei* as "sapors" to emphasize the medical rather than culinary virtues of the term. In the *Zuozhuan* we already find reference to these sapors having the power to stimulate and influence the movement of *qi* that animated and invigorated the body (*Zuozhuan*, 9.781). By the third century BCE, a neat pentic system of correspondences, known as the *wuxing* 五行 "five agents," began to dominate treatises on ritual and technical thought. For example, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, a ritualist's encyclopedia, suggests changing the emperor's diet according to a calendrical and ritual schedule. In this context we see the five sapors extending the pentic correspondence into the realms of nutrition, although the main dietary emphasis is restricted to grains, pulses and meat:

Earth	Sweet	(Late Summer)	Pannicled Millet	Beef
Metal	Pungent/acrid	Autumn	Sorghum	Dog
Water	Salty	Winter	Millet	Pork
Wood	Sour	Spring	Millet	Mutton
Fire	Bitter	Summer	Beans	Fowl

If we are to believe that Chinese *materia dietetica* are an accurate representation of current nutritional ideas, by the time of Yuan Mei, every foodstuff, like every drug, had a sapor associated with the pentic system, a *qi*, a relative potency, and was associated with healing different parts of the body. This *qi* in a medical context indicated thermostatic qualities: hot, warm, neutral, cool, and cold. The five flavors were each associated with an organ: the lungs, spleen, kidneys, liver, and heart (*Huangdi neijing suwen*, 7.23, 216). Yet it wasn't until late medieval Chinese herbals and dietaries that we have good evidence that individual foods or medicines were comprehensively assigned medical properties and the evidence for the diffusion of those ideas through society at any one time has not yet been well analyzed.

The flavor or *qi* assigned to a food is linked to its nutritional effect, quite like Galen's description of food classifications in his *De alimentorum facultatibus* (On the Properties of Foodstuffs). If a food had "heat" it would stimulate warmth in the body (Powell 2003, 57 [K524], 106 [K639]). The classification system of Chinese *materia medica* and dietaries had become comprehensive and integrated by the late medieval period: ginger and garlic, onions, chives, leeks, and hot pepper represent pungent or acrid, a range of tastes with no parallel in the four flavors of the European humoral tradition. Pungent might induce dispersing and expelling movements in the body, warming and stimulating *qi*. When related to the channels of moxibustion and acupuncture, pungent could enter the lung and large intestine channels, drying fluids and clearing mucus (Buell and Anderson 2000, 575–91). By attributing a quality of *qi* to every foodstuff, medical authors embraced nutrition within a larger framework of knowledge, thereby providing the rationale for what became an enormous and influential tradition of food combinations and prohibitions. The seventh-century CE scholar-physician

Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (fl. ca. 581–682) emphasized the importance of dietary prohibitions in his chapter on dietetics:

> If the *qi* of different foods are incompatible, the *essence* will be damaged. The body achieves completion from the flavors that nourish it. If the different flavors of foods are not harmonized, the body becomes impure. This is why the sage starts off by obeying the alimentary prohibitions in order to preserve his nature; if that proves ineffective, he has recourse to remedies for sustaining life. (*Beiji qianjin yaofang*, 26.465)

He emphasized that correct patterns of eating protect the body's essences, that medical or nutritional remedies are only appropriate when food combinations and prohibitions fail.

With the globalization of Cantonese culinary culture in our time, ready-made selections of restorative foods are commonly available on the shelves of overseas Chinatown supermarkets. Middle-aged Chinese at home and abroad are generally able to tell you that crab must be eaten with ginger to counteract its "cold" qualities, that chrysanthemum tea and steamed fish are cooling, mandarins are heating, but cut oranges rather than peeled are cold. Chinese wolfberries will strengthen blood and yin and walnuts are good for the brain. Some of the information is subject specific: "round white [coleslaw] cabbage" will make the head heavy and the feet light so a child might fall. Many concern pregnancy: if you eat fish soup the child will blow bubbles, if you look at a hare the child will be born with a split lip. Others appear simply to be related to gustatory pleasure: for instance, bean curd should not be eaten with vinegar. Religious precepts survive, such that strong spices like garlic or ginger on the breath will attract the ghosts who will want to lick your lips.

Can we sort out the different traditions that structure these sets of beliefs? How did such ideas first develop, and when? And, did the elaborated scholarly understanding of the medical action of different foods and drugs ever penetrate Chinese society? This chapter approaches the history of nutrition in China from a number of angles: the aesthetics of elite cuisine and the culinary arts, the tradition of cookbooks and dietary recipes, the physicians' *materia medica* and *materia dietetica*, and the pervasive and ever-changing belief in therapeutic food combinations and prohibitions.

The Medical Aesthetics of Pleasure and Power

Court nutritionalists designed and prepared banquets in early China, first for the ancestors and spirits, then to harmonize the king's varied diet, test for poisons, and to also accommodate the spirit of the season. Good cuisine provided a metaphor for statecraft, as explored in chapter two of this volume: one who could "season the soup" was a pseudonym for a good minister; the

"blending of the five flavors" was a metaphor for effective governance. And since the emperor's body itself was a conduit for the will of Heaven on earth, the work of the court dietary physician would, in concrete terms, not only nourish his master's body, but simultaneously heal the ills of the empire.

Each meal could be designed as a literal representation of ingesting the phases of yin and yang in a ritual embodiment of universal transformation:

> A gentleman fasts and observes vigils, makes sure to stay deep inside his house, and keeps his body utterly still. He refrains from music and sex, eschews association with his wife, *maintains a sparse diet, and avoids use of piquant condiments*. He settles the vital energies of his mind, maintains quietude within his various bodily organs and engages in no rash undertaking. *He does all these things in order to assure the completion of the first traces of yin*. (*Lüshi chunqiu*, 5.42; tr. Knoblock and Riegel 2000, 135)

Part of the adjustment of the diet to the environment was to blend ingredients and to flavor according to the passage of time. Ancient texts therefore specify dietary prescriptions and proscriptions for each season. Both culinary and medical recipes are concerned that a plant or foodstuff be harvested or killed when it is at the optimum point in its life cycle for enhancing potency or flavor. Failure to respect these seasonal proprieties would lead to all kinds of kinds of diseases: chefs at the imperial court and in great houses had to be masters of the art of harmonizing foods according to the season. For example, the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou), an idealized portrayal of the feudal administration during the golden age of Zhou, describes specialists in charge of shellfish: "in the spring they presented freshwater turtles and clams for the emperor, in the autumn they presented turtles and fish . . ." (*Zhouli*, 5.70).

The sixth-century *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術 (Essential Techniques for the Common People) records 280 recipes that follow the seasons, often specifying the very day that is auspicious for a particular food preparation (Sabban 1996). Later *materia medica* differentiated seasons explicitly, according to medicinal or culinary values: the martin are "eaten in winter as a food, at other seasons they are sought after as a medicine" (*Bencao*, 48.2634). Medical books were not above recording the kind of nutritional wisdom common to every kitchen hand: *mu* 鶩 ducks are best eaten between the Double Ninth Festival and Qingming Festival, because after that time they nest and grow thin; helicoid snails are collected and steamed in springtime when the flesh emerges from the shell. After the Qingming festival they become infested with insects (*Bencao*, 26.2576).

The "seasonal" in the culinary arts is partly grounded in this way in the simple practicalities and local knowledge of the agricultural rhythms of the year, but there are other criteria that structure the seasonal aesthetic in food. The earliest description of a king's kitchen staff comes from the *Zhouli*, where the *shiyi* 食醫 "dietetic physician" recommends eating according

to the principles of a seasonal homeopathy:

> Their task is to care for the balance of the six foodstuffs, six drinks, six dishes, hundred provisions, hundred soups and eight precious dainties of the king. When they prepare rice dishes, the *springtime* should be taken as an example. When soups are prepared, the *summer* should serve as an example. When they prepare sauces, the *fall* should be taken as an example. When they prepare drinks, *winter* should be taken as an example. All foods prepared in spring should be especially sour, those in summer especially bitter, those in fall especially pungent, and those in winter especially salty. In each case the balance should be re-established with sweetness . . . . (*Zhouli*, 5.72; tr. Unschuld 1986, 206)

Despite the varying rubrics based on the power of six or the traditional four seasons, it is clear that the fundamental principle is that one should eat foods that resonate with the season: thus in spring, the flavor "acid" or "sour" predominates, and since earth is often thought of as taking a central position, each dish should be balanced with "sweet," the sapor associated with earth.

A range of theories concerned with the therapeutic action of flavor are set out in the corpus of texts known collectively as the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon), probably compiled during the middle to later Han (Sivin 1993, 199–201; Unschuld 2003, 1–3). In chapters twenty-two and twenty-three, we find the pentic correspondences of the five agents comprehensively worked together with the cycles of the seasons and the action of the five sapors: acrid disperses, sour pulls together, sweet relaxes, bitter hardens, and salty softens (*Huangdi neijing suwen*, 7.23, 216–17).

In the *Huangdi neijing* we also find the potency of the five sapors used in the prevention as well as the treatment of illness. Yet, rather than consistently affirming the principle of seasonal homeopathy that we met in the *Zhouli*—eating foods of the sapor associated with the prevailing season—it offered a variety of theories about the therapeutic action of the sapors. Some, indeed, proposed the reverse: the sour sapor of spring might cause an excess which could damage the sinews (spring, sour, and sinews are associated with the agent wood), and in such cases it was necessary to prescribe allopathically according to the cycle of domination that was thought to exist between the five agents (Lewis 1990, 209). Since metal controls wood, wood controls earth and so on, the acrid sapor of metal should be eaten in spring to control the "sour" sapor, an excess of which will cause damage at that time (*Huangdi neijing suwen*, 5.61–79b; Unschuld 2003, 300). The competing and complementary theories that fill the treatises of the Yellow Emperor corpus should not really surprise us, now that we know the number of its authors and the patchwork nature of its compilation.

The seasonal activities of the lord's kitchen at the end of the Zhou era were mirrored in regimen designed for elite book collectors in south China of early imperial times. One second-century BCE manual of therapeutic exercise entitled *Yinshu* 引書 (The Pulling Book), begins with recommending

living by those qualities associated with the agriculturalist's year in four, rather than the ritual five seasons: "In the Spring generate, in the Summer grow, in the Autumn harvest, in the Winter preserve, this is the way of Ancestor Peng" (Zhangjiashan 2001, 109). It then specifies a related health regimen of diet, personal grooming, therapeutic exercises, cosmetic culture, breath cultivation, and regulated sexual practice associated with the mythical Ancestor Peng who was said to have lived for 700 years. In winter the wise are said to sleep a lot and keep warm, abstaining from sex. In summer it is important to drink water and eat more vegetables. Autumn is the time for throwing restraint to the wind and eating your fill.

> On autumn days bathe and wash the hair frequently. In eating and drinking your fill indulge the body's desires. *Enter the chamber* [a euphemism for sex]. Whenever the body is nourished and derives comfort from it—this is the way of nourishment. (Zhangjiashan 2001, 109)

In its spirit of keeping the body in its best possible condition through daily regimen, the *Yinshu* lifestyle is similar to the attitude of the Thracian physicians or to the Hippocratic treatises that describe regimen. Galen declared that the field of dietetics was the most valuable field of medicine (Powell 2003, 4–5). Not content with just combating degeneration of the body, for those in ancient China with time and leisure, the body could be embellished and augmented, rendered more vital, its senses more astute or pleasured through dietary means. Speaking of early China, Sterckx has argued that "sense experience and sensory perception were valued as a genuine part of moral reasoning . . ." (Sterckx 2003, 72). Far from leading to indulgence and moral decline, a disposition for culinary finesse demonstrated one's virtue in every sense of the word. The enlightened gentleman should be a micro-technician of his own health. In one sexual cultivation text excavated at Mawangdui (tomb closed in 168 BCE) we find a gentleman who has overindulged in sexual activity, using a range of techniques including "medicinal foods" to cure himself.

> The gentleman dwells in peace and happiness. Drinking and eating as he pleases, his skin is shiny and pores tight, his *qi* and blood are full and his body is light and supple. But if he has intercourse in haste he cannot guide [the transformations] and he becomes ill. Sweating and panting, he becomes agitated at the centre and his *qi* is in chaos. If he is unable to have treatment, [the condition] generates internal heat; he takes medicines and applies moxibustion to draw the *qi*, and takes *medicinal foods* to fortify his defences. ("Discussion of the Ultimate Way Under Heaven"; *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 164)

Many strictures about diet and daily regimen are rooted in anxiety about male sexual performance, and its relationship to long life and enhanced sensory perception. More advice from Ancestor Peng suggests massaging the abdomen, exercise, breath cultivation and dietary means to strengthen and

"consummate" yin (here a euphemism for the penis) (Harper 1998, 401). A flourishing yin also manifests generally in a physical radiance: brightness of the eyes, a clear voice, and gleaming skin are a radiance that can be observed, along with other qualities that can only be experienced, such as keenness of the ears, sturdiness, and moving *qi*. Together they form a code for the state of yin, of strength and resourcefulness that is the outcome of successful regimen and self-cultivation (Lo 2000b, 38–60).

Treatises that set out the *theory* of sexual cultivation tend not to specify dietary recommendations. But the Han tomb libraries also contain books of remedies more directly concerned with the practice of erotic stimulation and reproductive health. Recipes using ingredients like asparagus, beef, chicken, eggs, snails, wasps, and pannicled millet are said to stimulate erection, excite female sexuality, or condition the body in pregnancy. An example:

> If you wish to give birth to a girl, boil a black hen; have the woman alone eat the meat and drink the liquid and sit on a mat. ("Book of the Generation of the Fetus"; Harper 1998, 381–83)

Diet, sexual practice, and therapeutic exercise come together in this exercise aimed at cultivating yin, both the radiant state and the penis itself.

> Eating and Pulling: to assist in increasing *qi*, when eating and drinking always shift the yin and move it. When in bed once again pull it. Thus it is said: "Give it drink; and also instruct and counsel it." Pull on the right and bend the left foot. ("Recipes for Nurturing Life"; tr. Harper 1998, 359).

Specific remedies are mostly delivered in decoctions, pastes, powders, or pill form, or on aphrodisiac napkins for rubbing on or inside the body. Some are foodstuffs prescribed like medicine: chicken eggs taken with liquor at dawn beginning with one on the first day and increasing by one-a-day until forty two have been consumed. Others are quasi-culinary preparations, often involving gruel and millet preparations. One dish to prepare the body for intercourse involves eating steamed plantain, another, boiling a whole black rooster with prepared asparagus in an old iron kettle. The stock is then reused to boil the heart, lung and liver of a black male dog, which is then taken "at the late afternoon meal." Choice beef or venison may be inserted into the vagina to arouse a woman, or sliced thinly and thrice cooked with yam to lighten the body and increase *qi* (Harper 1998, 336, 339–40).

Thus, among the earliest attested dietary traditions is food for strengthening and empowering the sexual and reproductive body. Dietary regulation formed an integral part of the longevity practices of the early Han elite. It was at the heart of a culture of self-cultivation that flourished in the centuries around the inauguration of Chinese empire and that served, in part, to embody a shift from a view of external agents as a source of illness and also healing, to locating agency and intentionality within. Worthy of further

scrutiny is the fact that the recipe and remedy literature of this period, whether pharmacological or dietary, is not framed in the language of yin, yang and the five agents, but directly matches symptom and remedy. When, and to what extent, did these theories really begin to have an influence on dietary culture?

From Kitchen to Study?

Conventional histories of Chinese medicine often imagine that empirical activity generated China's age-old dietary knowledge, its classifications and techniques. As the most readily accessible site for practical experimentation, was the kitchen the source of scholarly medical knowledge? Unschuld has recently observed that "It may well be that the correspondences between qualities such as flavor and thermonature . . . were elaborated first, not in view of therapeutic drugs, but in regard to the consumption of food" (Unschuld 2003, 300). How much did culinary observation structure medical thought?

Kitchen ingredients and methods were very much a part of early remedy making as is evidenced in this remedy from the Mawangdui tomb site:

> Urine retention. . . . To treat it boil three *sheng* of black soybeans in three . . . of fine gruel vinegar. Cook rapidly. When it bubbles, stop the fire. When the bubbling subsides, cook again, stopping after it bubbles for the third time. Sieve to obtain the liquid. Use one portion of oysters and three of smithed *dujin* 毒堇— altogether two substances. . . . Take one three-fingered pinch reaching to the knuckles, put it into lukewarm gruel vinegar, drink it. Drink before eating or after eating as you wish. . . . ("Wushier bingfang" 五十二病方; tr. Harper 1998, 253–54)

A belief in the empirical spirit of Chinese medicine, that knowledge of the virtues of food and drugs came through trial and error, is enshrined in the legend of Shennong 神農 (Divine Farmer). Han historians and myth makers described the Divine Farmer's fundamental task as having to lead humanity out of a state of hunting and savagery, away from eating raw flesh, drinking blood and wearing skins, toward an agrarian utopia (*Huainanzi*, 19.573). Later accounts describe how he thrashed all plants so that they revealed their essential sapors and smells. He then classified those plants that were fit for consumption and for medicine. From his tradition of empirical testing his name was evoked in the title of a number of famous *materia medica* beginning with the *Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經 (Divine Farmer's *materia medica*; ca. first-century CE). No doubt China's legendary "scientific spirit" inspired many to experiment with herbs and foods, but their findings are inevitably expressed through the lens of contemporary culture.

To begin to understand the provenance of dietary theory we must first examine the relevant classifications and texts to be found in the literature of

elite cuisine, the tradition of cookbooks and dietary recipes, the physician's *materia dietetica*, and finally, the pervasive and ever-changing literature that deals with therapeutic food combinations and prohibitions.

The recovery of 300 fragmented bamboo strips from the Hunan tomb library of Wu Yang 吳陽 (d. 162 BCE) at Huxishan 虎溪山 in Yuanling 沅陵 gives us absolute confirmation of cookery books concerned with culinary aesthetic and practice rather than health. Wu Yang could undoubtedly contemplate a diverse and nourishing variety of foodstuffs at his table including rice, grain and vegetables, dog, goose, lamb, deer, pig, chicken, swallow, beef, and hare cooked variously by steaming, braising, and pot-cooking using alcohol, ginger, and various ingredients for flavoring, but his recipes are not concerned with the medical properties of the five agents.[1]

Thus, neither cooking nor therapeutic remedies systematically invoke yin, yang or five agent theories. Culinary techniques were also essential in the preparation of medical remedies. Jia Sixie's *Qimin yaoshu* (Essential Techniques for the Common People) and Cui Hao's 崔浩 (d. 450 CE) *Shi jing* 食經 (Culinary Classic) are an important record of the range of nutritional literature circulating between early and medieval times in China. On the one hand, like Wu Yang's cookbook, these texts display no apparent interest in therapeutic value and the treatment of illness, but rather describe technical and aesthetic issues of food production. Jia Sixie, however, quotes from two sources, an unidentified *Shi jing* 食經 (Culinary Classic) and a *Shi ci* 食次 (Culinary Procedures). The title of the former text associates it with thirty books of similar title and others known as *Shi fang* 食方 (Culinary Remedies) listed under the rubric of "medicine" in the bibliographical treatise of the Sui dynastic history (Engelhardt 2001, 174). A third type of culinary literature is recorded earlier in the *Hanshu* bibliography as the *Shi jin* 食禁 (Culinary Prohibitions). We do not know whether Wu Yang's book was a Culinary Classic, but if we are to make a distinction between the different genres of culinary and pharmacotherapy books found in Han tomb libraries it must be on the basis of culinary aesthetic.

This documentary evidence of cookbooks from Han through Sui times suggests that the collection, reading and compiling of recipe and remedy literature was a common activity for Chinese literati. Beyond the practicalities of preparing food and medicine, as part of a body of knowledge that enhanced the life of the elite, we will see that the culinary arts, like painting and poetry, might be enjoyed for nostalgic reasons to do with times and places, for embellishing educated discourse, insinuating a wealth of travel and culture in the reader and collector.

Materia dietetica and the Power of Gentle Remedies

Tang alchemist and medical author Sun Simiao provides us with an extant medieval source that organizes knowledge of the effects of food on the human being. In chapter twenty-six of his *Beiji qianjin yaofang* 備急千金要方 (Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold Pieces for

Emergencies), Sun aimed to popularize knowledge of the medical properties of food in 149 curative monographs modeled on and embellishing the work of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (452–536 CE). Sun Simiao, drawn toward gentle remedies, included in his marvelously eclectic medical compendia a wide range of longevity practices such as sexual techniques, breath meditations, massage, and medical gymnastics. As a fierce critic of strong drugs such as *wushi* 五石 ("the five minerals"), which probably contained arsenic and by Wei-Jin times (third to fourth century) had became fashionable as a stimulant, he urged people to burn the prescription (Lo 2002, 198–99). To no great surprise, he adopted the nosological categories that favored nutritional and fortifying foods over powerful drugs first framed by Tao Hongjing. Following Tao, Sun Simiao categorized foods as *yang ming* 養命 "nourishing heaven" or *yang xing* 養性 "nourishing nature," the two upper levels of three grades (*san pin* 三品) of minerals or foodstuffs. These he valued far more than fast-action drugs attributed with *du* 毒 medical efficacy (also simply poison), that, when taken for long periods, would become poisonous. His famous quotation compares strong drugs to the reckless attack of imperial soldiers and represents a general move towards milder drugs also endorsed by a new state sponsored *materia medica* (the *Tang xinxiu bencao* 唐新修本草; Newly Compiled Pharmacopoeia of the Tang Dynasty), and a penal code indicting physicians who harmed their patients.

> The nature of drugs is hard and violent, just like that of imperial soldiers. Since soldiers are so savage and impetuous, how could anybody dare to deploy them recklessly? If they are deployed inappropriately, harm and destruction will result everywhere. Similarly, excessive damage is the consequence if drugs are thrown at illnesses. A good doctor first makes a diagnosis, and having found out the cause of the disease, he tries to cure it first by food. When food fails, then he prescribes medicine. (*Beiji qianjin yaofang*, 26.464)

Sun's work was extended with simple preparation methods and prescriptions by his student Meng Shen 孟詵 (621–713) into the specialist dietary work, the *Buyang fang* 補養方 (Prescriptions to Replenish and Nourish; *Jiu Tangshu*, 47.1049). Meng Shen, like Sun Simiao, was a polymath associated with the early organization of Daoism, and once vice president of the imperial Department of Astronomy. In later life he retired to the mountains and devoted himself to the study of medicinal foods. We know Meng's work from 138 sections quoted in the earliest extant *materia dietetica*, Zhang Ding's 張鼎 (eighth century) *Shiliao bencao* 食療本草 (*Materia medica* for Dietary Therapy; Engelhardt 2001, 184–85). Each monograph in *Shiliao bencao* gives the particular actions of the herbs and substances understood primarily in terms of their thermonature and the conditions for which they are indicated. Lotus seeds, for instance, are said to be cold in nature and treat an insufficiency of the five viscera benefiting the tracts and channels. Taken raw they move the *qi* (Ma 1998, 680). Generally speaking the earlier *materia dietetica* record only the occasional rudimentary

recipe. For instance:

> Take one slice of *mu gua* 木瓜 (papaya or quince), seven leaves of mulberry, three large roasted jujubes, break open, boil in two large *sheng* [approximately 200 cc] of water, reducing it to half a large *sheng*. Bow the head and take it . . . . (Ma 1998, 674)

For some time Sun and Meng's work was to set the pattern for *materia medica* and *dietetica*. From a fragment of the *Shiliao bencao* recording twenty-five monographs recovered in a Dunhuang cache of manuscripts (S.76), quotations in the *Zhenglei bencao* 證類本草 (Categorized Pharmacopoeia, eleventh to twelfth century) and *Ishimpō* 醫心方 (Remedies at the Heart of Medicine, 984 CE), we know that both texts survived at least into the eleventh century.

After the Tang period the next book to mark a distinct transformation in dietary literature is certainly aimed at recording kitchen experience in the matter of cooking, and also instructing kitchen workers. Hu Sihui's 忽思慧 (fourteenth century) *Yinshan zhengyao* 飲膳正要 (Propriety and Essentials in Eating and Drinking), a *materia dietetica* and cookbook presented to the Mongol court, gives a guide to the preparation of over 200 dishes, complete with detailed measurements for ingredients and carefully set out cooking methods. At court, in China, the Mongols celebrated their mastery of their own heartlands, the Chinese empire and the Muslim communities of Turkistan, Northern Iran, portions of the Caucasus, and the Pontic Steppe with a level of internationalism never before witnessed in the more inwardly looking Chinese courts.

In culinary terms this seems manifest in what Sabban calls a Chinese "refinement" of Middle Eastern culinary style and ingredients overlaid with Chinese cooking methods and medical values (Sabban 1986, 167–70). There are recipes for phyllo-type pastries, white cheese, goat and bear soups, many kinds of breads, and noodles. The Chinese structuring of medical potency is very clear in the description of carp:

> Sweetish in flavor, cooling, and has poison [ous efficacy]. It is good for coughing-bringing up *qi*, and for jaundice. It controls thirst and tranquillizes the womb. It regulates oedema and deviant foot *qi*. It should not be eaten after a contagious ailment. Those with chronic asthma cannot eat it. (Buell and Anderson 2000, 558)

Allopathic principles regularly shape the dietary recommendations: "The *qi* of spring is warming. It is beneficial to eat wheat to cool it" (Buell and Anderson 2000, 408). Numerous pathologies arise from an "overindulgence in the five flavors": "sweet flavors weaken, if too much is eaten the stomach becomes soft and slow" and the five agent cycle of dominance is employed to structure prohibitions, "it is prohibited for those with heart illnesses to eat salt, for salt corresponds to water which dominates fire, the agent of the heart" (Buell and Anderson 2000, 411).

Medical values are not consistently assigned: at times there is a sense that the authors recognized the absurdity of categorizing foreign foodstuffs in the absence of a received wisdom. Most of the Mongolian meat recipes, for example, do not have specific medical value. Those that do, are loosely classified according to sympathetic resonance, for instance, boiled sheep's *heart*, treats *heart* energy agitation, while the *loins* treat *lumbago*. Here is Hu deliberating on the nature of wolf meat:

> Ancient *materia medica* do not include entries on wolf meat. At present we state that its nature is heating. It treats asthenia. I have never heard that it is poisonous for those eating it. In the case of the present recipe we use spices to help its flavor. It wards the five internal organs and warms the center. (Buell and Anderson 2000, 295)

Without previous authority, we find Hu Sihui tentatively relying on hearsay. Elsewhere his classifications are formulaic. The majority of grains and ninety five recipes under "strange delicacies of combined flavors" increase *qi* or supplement the "centre," the home of the alimentary tracts. Many recipes are based around foods traditionally associated with the immortals rather than yin, yang, and the five agents—notably Chinese asparagus and pine nuts, but also crystallized honey, Chinese root, yam, sesame seeds, and cow's milk. Only one recipe in the section, "Doses and Foods of the Beneficent Immortals," which comes from a dietary source, speaks of eating fresh chestnuts for "deficient and weak kidney *qi*."

In contrast, the medical action of new fruit and vegetable recipes seem more detailed and sophisticated. Thus we learn that red currant puree brings forth saliva and controls thirst, warms the essence and augments *qi*; apricot frost puree harmonizes and accords lung *qi*, benefits the diaphragm and cures coughing (Buell and Anderson 2000, 378–79). Recipes for illnesses keyed to the physiology of classical Chinese medicine can be found in the section entitled "Foods that Cure the Various Illnesses" where a passage preceding the recipes themselves typically begins, "Bream gruel: It cures asthenia of spleen and stomach, leaking diarrhea from which one does not recover for a long time" or "Chinese Matrimony Vine Fruit and Sheep's Kidney Congee: It cures yang *qi* degeneration, ache of waist and foot, the five kinds of impairments and the seven wounds" (Buell and Anderson 2000, 408, 416).

Despite this medical overlay, many of Hu's recipes are worldly and sophisticated. They seem credible to a cook. But it is this pervasive medical structure and content, rather than the recipes of *Yinshan zhengyao*, that has ensured continuity of Chinese interest in the Yuan diet. It is not only that medical values have been attributed to foodstuffs and also the recipes themselves, but the recipes are also sandwiched between substantial tracts on longevity, foods to avoid or not to combine, how to behave in pregnancy, and miscellaneous precepts for hygiene and deportment.

The Gourmet Physician

It is when we get on to the 1,898 drugs and 11,096 prescriptions of Li Shizhen's 李時珍 (1518–1593) monumental *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Systematic *Materia Medica*) that we find culinary experimentation and expertise gaining momentum and prominence in an explicitly medical context (Unschuld 1986, 149). Li was not the first to include culinary recipes in a *materia medica*. Yet in the thirty years it took to compile *Bencao gangmu*, he mined the kitchens of China on an unprecedented scale, historically through the 40 books and 277 authors identified in the list of books at the beginning of his opus, and then through contemporary oral and technical traditions (Needham 1986; Métailié 2001, 222, 308–21). Through his enterprise we can review how the culinary arts shaped and structured knowledge of the natural environment.

Each of Li's entries includes a comprehensive discussion of the medicinal properties of the foodstuffs, food combinations and prohibitions according to the ancient formula of the five "sapors," and of relative medical potency. But it was Li Shizhen's categorization of *cai* 菜, roughly translated as "edible vegetables," that first drew my attention to the theme of how much the kitchen arts had shaped medical thinking (Lo and Barrett 2005). There is an ancient dichotomy between terms like *shi* 食 and *fan* 飯 that, in their narrow sense, distinguish grains and grain food, and *cai*, the dishes of meat and vegetables. In Li Shizhen's classificatory system, the *cai* contrast with *cao* 草, the wild herbs. They are also distinct from the categories that suggest edible meats (four-legged, avian and shelled animals respectively). The preface to the section on edible vegetables refers to the work of dietary physicians and suggests that the plants in this category assist the grains through the nourishing medical properties of the five flavors.

Most notably, it is when we get to the meat, game bird, and seafood recipes that we see evidence of sophisticated culinary skill with a concern for flavor and texture expressed in a language that transcends medical significance. The frequent use of words describing "fine" or "delicious" food reflect Li's general enthusiasm. We find allusions to the sensual pleasures of the eating experience; for example, gerbil meat is "extremely succulent and delicious, and crisp like sucking pig" (*Bencao*, 51.2910). Food is ranked by olfactory or gustatory grade on a scale that begins with having little or no taste to being strong, from earthy, through goaty to rank. Often taste is described through analogy, one thing tastes like another, or is stronger, finer, coarser and so on. But in these flights of culinary appreciation he rarely refers to the language of medical potency. Yet the preface to the bird section notes that (probably on account of being sky-borne) birds are eaten for their "yang" properties, but the coincidence of flavor and potency goes beyond the medical. The adjutant bird for example is best roasted. As a dried meat it is a delicacy making one so strong one can run like a horse (*Bencao*, 47. 2461; tr. Read 1932, no. 249).

Li has strongly stated personal preferences, which are nowhere clearer than in his ode to the crab:

> They are excellent for salting. The fresh crab should be eaten with ginger and vinegar followed by strong wine. The yellow part is sucked out and the claws broken open. A little is appetizing, and how can it be poisonous? A glutton will eat more than ten at one meal . . . [and become ill], but why should the crabs be blamed? (Read 1937, 36)

He has much to say about the virtue of different meats. The taste of tiger meat is not very good, it is earthy though it is all right when salted (*Bencao*, 51.2820). Wild horse meat is like ordinary horsemeat (*Bencao*, 51. 2835). Quail stands out for fine treatment (*Bencao*, 51.2623), and under *yang* 羊 (sheep/goat) we have a recipe that represents the Han concern for ways to neutralize the distinctive flavor of mutton:

> Animals which have wool that is too downy have a strong goaty taste. The meat is tenderized by cooking with almonds or broken tiles. Walnuts remove the rank taste. A bamboo rat improves the flavor. (*Bencao*, 50. 2724)

Elsewhere bamboo rat is emphasized as the preeminent meat tenderizer (*Bencao*, 51.2909).

We can see a remarkable culinary aesthetic operating in the rubrics of classification, in the attribution of sources, and in the language, procedures and ingredients that structure the recipes. We can distinguish the culinary from the medical by descriptions of the softness of the meat or its saturation with flavor, by references to the addition of flavoring ingredients, to color, to the adjusting of heat or cooking methods. But from Han times, remedy literature found in Dunhuang military deposits testifies to complex prescriptions, where preparation of the drugs includes milk, camel milk, pork fat, and white honey to thin or stabilize the medicines (Xie 2005). So we must be wary of drawing hard and fast boundaries. Pharmacological techniques have always drawn from the culinary arts for the purposes of making a remedy palatable to the patient. Perhaps a kitchen recipe is only by default not a decoction, infusion or tisane designed for ease of application rather than for pleasure, a preparation that is eaten rather than applied topically or via the nose. The difficulties of classification might be represented in the following recipe where a fragrant aroma makes a nutritional remedy positively attractive to a child with acute diarrhea:

> For *guachang* 刮肠 (diarrhoea after eating?) and dysentery in infants, where the condition is so serious that the child has its eyes closed and cannot eat: one *liang* of prime pork cut into thin slices and roast till fragrant. Take one *qian* of *ni fenmo* 腻粉末 (grease powder?), sprinkle it on and get the patient to eat it. Or else hold it under the patient's nose

> so that s/he can smell the fragrance, and s/he will naturally feel like eating it. (*Bencao*, 50.2686–87).

Li Shizhen's work is a rich source of information about regional variation in culinary aesthetic. Through fieldwork he complements his scholarly research, although we suspect that he often uses his knowledge to reinforce personal preference and regional bias. On *shu* 鼠 (mouse/rat), he states with barely concealed contempt that "the Cantonese like to eat them, but prefer to call them domestic deer (*jia lu* 家鹿)" (*Bencao*, 51.2898). And in his description of the southern delicacy of smoked or salted macaque, a domestic animal whose indiscriminate diet of leftovers renders it useless in medicine, he implies that southerners are less discerning. The impression is reinforced by scattered comments such as that southern pork "yields a thick deleterious gravy" in comparison to the northern thin gravy (*Bencao*, 1769; tr. Read, 1931, no. 322). Social distinctions are also frequently reinforced through culinary trope, although the exotic is not exclusively the preserve of the elite, peasants for example, "like to eat pelican meat and use its fat in medicine" (*Bencao*, 47.2562).

Correct identification of ingredients is an essential part of medical practice. In an expanding market economy and cosmopolitan environment, that skill required travel and worldliness. Thus, in the second century, we find Galen working across vast areas and traveling explicitly to identify wheat species. Through travel and knowledge of how the international and local environments interact, both Galen and Li Shizhen claim authority and status. And by eulogizing the foodways of the ancients and quoting from canonical literature Li aligns himself with the great literary traditions. A panoramic knowledge of contemporary cuisine could appropriate every substance within the limits of the known world to legitimate the global authority of his *materia medica*.

With comprehensive research into Li Shizhen's work it will be possible to assess the degree to which he personally gathered medical and culinary information from local traditions and included it in his *materia medica*. But it is quite another thing to address the problem of how pervasive the medical knowledge of food was in Ming times. Novels are a wonderful source for studying medical plurality (Cullen 1993; Berg 2002). It is arguable that they are just as likely to give us a good picture of medical practice as are the medical canons, or case histories. The same might be said for contemporary foodways. At a rough trawl through the literature, it seems that references to food and medicine are mostly concerned with their tonic value, as the erotic novels *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 and *Rouputuan* 肉蒲團 most vividly illustrate. Here the latter suggests that there is a distinction between the medical and the culinary, but founded on issues concerned with toxicity and restraint.

> In fact its [sex] medicinal effects closely resemble those of ginseng and aconite, two substances with which it can be used

> interchangeably . . . Potent tonics as they are, ginseng and aconite should be taken only in small doses and over long periods of time. In other words they should be treated as medicine not as food. When swallowed indiscriminately, without regard to dosage or frequency, they can prove fatal. Now sex has precisely the same advantages and disadvantages . . . When treated as medicine, sex relieves us from pent-up emotion, but when treated as food it gravely depletes our semen and blood. (*Rouputuan*; tr. Hanan 1990, 5–6)

The medical value of food in Ming literature, particularly in these erotic novels, is expressed fairly directly and rarely couched in theoretical terminology. Milky drinks or rice gruel are often taken to fortify. And unlike the classifications of Sun Simiao where food is associated with gentle remedies, in the passage just quoted we find food conflated with sex in images of gluttony and excess.

Prohibitions

In addition to its nutritive function, food has social, symbolic, and religious usages all of which generated taboos. Indeed it is precisely these functions that both intensified its nutritive strength and provided different frameworks for complex sets of prohibition; recommendations for the correct way of eating and drinking go hand in hand with lists of medical interdictions. We can differentiate the prohibitions into those concerned with life stages, calendrical prohibitions, and ritual, as well as a range of different dietary models that reflect variously longevity, hedonistic, or ethical and religious convictions (Despeux, unpublished manuscript).

The first evidence of many of the genres of food prohibition can be found scattered through the literature of the philosophers; we have heard that Confucius was already concerned about toxicity arising from failures of hygiene and spoiled food, that horse liver was considered potentially fatal and that white mule liver had a strong healing power. Sima Qian complained in the first century BCE that the "techniques of yin and yang are too detailed, and multiply prohibitions, restraining [people] and exacerbating the things they are afraid of" (*Shiji*, 130.3289). Sympathetic magic, avoidance of foods which might act as a vehicle for demonic infestation, or poison from decay or damage are all so well represented in medical literature that by medieval times it caused Jia Sixie to claim that "it suffices to know the great principles [without need] to follow the meanderings in their smallest details" (Sabban 1996, 333), a relaxed attitude also adopted by Sun Simiao in weighing up their relative value against other criteria for shaping treatment.

Food taboos pervade the dietary literature expressing a variety of ideas about nutrition, all aimed at protecting elements of the inner body. Many of these taboos are concerned with determining auspicious or inauspicious times and key the consumption of specific foodstuffs to cosmic regularities,

in particular the lunar cycles based on the sixty-day *ganzhi* 干支 (stems and branches) system. This genre of medical interdiction was one aspect of the Han culture of *shushu* 數術, that is, the art of calculation common to techniques of divination and the understanding of "celestial patterns" at the foundation of the astro-calendrical traditions. The depth of the penetration of *shushu* texts into society also testifies to a surprising alignment of technical culture: however popular and widely distributed, the prohibition texts were also an integral part of the scholarly medical traditions in both early and medieval times (Lo 2001; Kalinowski 2005). Among the Qin almanacs recovered at Shuihudi we find the earliest systems to identify illnesses arising from food with inauspicious times according to the heavenly stems. For instance:

> When on *jia* 甲 and *yi* 乙 days there is illness, the [deceased] father and mother are [the source of] the calamity. It is gotten through meat that is wrapped in lacquer implements to the east . . . . When on *bing* 丙 and *ding* 丁 days there is illness the father-in-law is [the source of] the calamity. The illness is gotten through red meat, cock, and wine . . . When on *ren* 任 and *gui* 癸 days there is illness, when you do not meet people, an outside ghost is the [source of the] calamity. It is gotten through wine and slivers of dried and fresh meat served with vegetable and meat sauce. (Liu 1993, 116–18)

To demonstrate how the many traditions of dietary prohibition are founded in this discourse about auspicious days let us take a brief look at the virtues of toad meat when eaten on the *correct* day. From Han times the toad was attributed an enormous range of magical abilities, not the least because of its association with the moon and, by implication, cycles of fertility. Projected side by side on the surface of the moon in the company of a rabbit, the toad was seen literally gobbling up the moon as it waxed and waned (*Shiji*, 128.3237; *Huainanzi*, 7.2 and 17.16). And in the Daoist text *Can tong qi* 參同契 (Concordance of the Three) we hear that the spirit of the toad and the rabbit together illuminate the *qi* of sun and moon; that the toad divines the divisions of time and that the soul of the rabbit spurts forth light (Lo 2001, 71–72). Ultimately, whole treatises of acupuncture prohibitions based on the lunar cycles, such as the *Yellow Emperor's Toad Classic (Huangdi hama jing)*, take the toad as a kind of logo for the importance of correct timing (Lo 2001).

Li Shizhen associates toads with the essence of earth, rendered magical by the new moon. According to *Bencao gangmu*, toad meat had a wide range of applications from bestowing power over mountain goblins to curing mad dog bite. One preparation thought to enable a person to walk on water was heated over a charcoal fire until it vomited up a big seed-like thing with a metallic luster, rather reminiscent of the moon itself (*Bencao*, 42.2335–56). When caught traveling eastward on the fifth day of the fifth moon, toads have special properties: dried in the wind, they cure toxic boils; its venom,

harvested on the same day and combined with linseed and cinnabar, was used to treat malnutrition in infants.

The "numerical echo"—here the fifth day of the fifth moon—is ubiquitous in remedies and clearly increased potency (Sabban 1996, 339–40). Spider's web, for instance, collected on the seventh day of the seventh month, cures memory loss. Various sequences of time, apart from the *ganzhi* system, structured both recommendations and prohibitions. *Qimin yaoshu* favors the odd months and multiples of three and seven in some recipes, and of three, six, seven, and nine in alcoholic drinks (Sabban 1996, 332–38). In contrast, the frog is best eaten in the fourth moon because by the fifth they begin to get old and can be collected to put in medicine. In this last example, we have evidence of how prohibitions according to the lunar calendar are concerned with the optimum value of the meat at any one time according to its purpose. Thus old meat might be appropriate for medicine, but not food. Equally, meat of a certain age, or quality, may be spoiled.

Bernard Read lists forty-one kinds of poisonous meats from Li Shizhen's *Bencao gangmu*. Most of the prohibitions caution against the anomalous: diseased, rank, old or ruined meat, meat from animals with deformity or inauspicious coloring and so on. Others are mediated by the theories of the five agents. Unlike the seasonal homeopathy of the *Zhouli*, Li's criteria are essentially allopathic in the sense that he believes that liver will weaken the liver, and should not be eaten in spring, or flesh of the animal associated with a person's astrological constellation will disquiet the spirit (Read 1931, 348).

A large number of the prohibitions that survive in the medical literature are designed to aid fertility and reproduction (Despeux 2003). Many dietary recommendations aim to determine the gender of a child: black hen stock favors a girl, artemesia and larvae from a beehive and the penis of a dog will nurture a boy. This is commonplace in medical literature, beginning with the Mawangdui *Taichan shu* 胎產書 (Book of the Generation of the Foetus) discovered at Mawangdui, which also includes a number of ways to influence the health of the foetus and future fertility:

> In the first month it is called "flowing into the form." Food and drink must be the finest; the sour boiled dishes must be thoroughly cooked. Do not eat acrid or rank foods. This is called "initial fixture." In the second month it first becomes lard. Do not eat acrid or stinking foods. The dwelling place must be still. For a boy there must be no exertion, lest the hundred joints all ail. This is called "first deposition." In the third month it first becomes suet and has the appearance of a gourd. During this time it does not have a fixed configuration, and if exposed to things it transforms. For this reason lords, sires, and great men must not employ dwarves. Do not observe monkeys. Do not eat onion and ginger; and do not eat a rabbit boiled dish. (Harper 1998, 378–79)

Since in the early months the foetus itself resembles raw food masses such as lard and suet, it must be kept warm and harmoniously combined and

cooked to maturity with the right ingredients, whether consumed or imagined by the mother. From the fourth to the ninth month it grows and develops specific characteristics; blood, *qi*, muscle, bone, skin and hide, and filament hair, by virtue of the six powers, water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and stone respectively in the usual order of the cycle of dominance, with the unique addition of stone. In the spirit of creating the right environment for healthy development this process is often referred to as the "education of the foetus" or "instructing children in the womb." It combines positive imaging, physical training with rice wheat and mud eel for the blood, beef and mutton for the *qi*.

Over a thousand years later the *Yinshan zhengyao* must surely represent the height of this tradition: the first chapter sets out all the fine things a well-to-do mother should and should not consume and hear during pregnancy and after birth, together with instructions for the wet nurse and for the child itself. Moral constraint of the mother is clearly intended with the indictment of sparrow meat and liquor as the cause of lustful, shameless children. Other notable associations are donkey meat as the cause of lateness in a child, and turtle meat and short-necks. Mule meat makes for stubborn, difficult birth (Buell and Anderson 2000, 269).

Judging by the sheer quantity of medical texts devoted to food interdictions, they must have been as much if not more at the heart of Chinese dietary advice as were positive recommendations for healthy eating. Despeux maintains that while by the tenth century lists of drug incompatibilities had risen to a final figure of eighteen, foods were less systematically defined. She lists antipathies that recur across medical and dietetic literature: prawns with plum or raw vegetables, horsemeat with ginger, pork with beef, sheep's liver with pepper or pork, sheep's intestines with soybean or plum, mutton with raw shredded fish or with cheese, rabbit with ginger, chicken's eggs with chives or garlic, chicken with rabbit, bamboo shoots with perch (Despeux, unpublished manuscript).

Perhaps the most fundamental prohibition was against excess. Sometimes lavish banquets emphasized the robust and fulsome health of the host or the sway of the emperor, but the Confucian moral censure of desire finds expression in many contexts. The theme of abstinence also dominates religious practice, from the hierarchy of fasting during mourning periods, through vegetarianism to the grain avoidance techniques upheld by adepts in the pursuit of immortality. Early imperial literature concerned with longevity, practices, such as the Zhangjiashan *Yinshu*, likewise contains precautionary tales about excess and indulgence:

> so if the sage becomes fat and neglects boundaries, the stomach, the sinews and bone will not bear the burden. His *qi* is too plentiful, his blood is excessive, the *qi* and blood decay and fester, the hundred joints all sink, it [*qi*] leaves empty the twenty extremities and turning back it goes to the heart. If these cannot be treated in advance then the sound of crying will be heard. (*Zhangjiashan* 2001, 144)

In other words, if a man gets fat through overindulgence, he jeopardizes his musculoskeletal structure, runs the risk of prolapse, his veins will collapse or become obstructed, suffer from whole body oedema, and die of some kind of heart attack. Anxiety about excessive consumption is further medicalized during the following centuries in the "five interdictions" of the *Huangdi neijing*. Indulgence in each of the five flavors damages a particular substrate of the body.

> Sweet goes to the flesh; in the case of diseases of the flesh, one must not take sweet in large quantities. Sour goes to the sinews; in the case of diseases of the sinews, one must not take sour in large quantities. These are the five interdictions. Do not eat large quantities. (*Huangdi neijing suwen*, 7.23, 219)

As with the ritual food offerings in early China the prohibition here is an excess of strong flavors, and, as we saw earlier, one way of controlling the consumption of a flavor would be to eat of that flavor that dominates the excess according to the conquest cycle of the five agents. With this observation we return to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: can we identify Chinese ideals of "perfect flavor" in medical ideas about nourishing the body?

Conclusion

Is perfect flavor derived from neutralizing an excess associated through the five agents with an underlying pattern of disorder or the natural tendency of the season? "Take the surplus and supplement the insufficiency" (*Zhangjiashan*, 244, "Maishu") is an adage that describes harmonizing excess of *qi* in acupuncture treatises of the second century BCE. The medical context for this kind of equitable distribution of resources was so well known in Han times that we find it being used as a metaphor for the imperial economy in the *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 (Discourse of Salt and Iron; 81 BCE) (*Yantie lun*, 14.180). That medical and state metaphors tend to resonate has been well researched in many cultural contexts, but there is a long way to go before we really understand how deeply those metaphors came to bear on Chinese practice.

Since the "sapor" of a food was known to stimulate *qi*, the bones of a dietary theory were set in the Han period. Unlike treatises on acupuncture, remedy and recipe literature from this time, however, does *not* testify to that theory being comprehensively integrated into *materia medica* or *materia dietetica*. Despite the survival of a considerable culinary and dietary literature from the sixth century onward it is also not possible to confirm the degree to which medical cuisine was popular during the Tang period.

Almost all the threads of early Chinese nutritional culture are brought together in Hu Sihui's fourteenth-century Mongolian-inspired dietary. Hu's intention is to avoid excess and neutralize the *qi* of the season or pathology.

To this end he provides a detailed *materia dietetica* and recipes as the means through which appropriate diet could be put together. In theory, dietary medicine could provide the framework for diagnosing and treating individual responses to food, their desires, and pathologies. On closer inspection, we found some ingredients more flavorful than others, some qualities more common, the universal prohibitions most pervasive. And for treating all the illnesses of old age, to replenish essence, strengthen marrow, to treat soreness of the waist and knee, abdominal masses, wind phlegm, worm infestation, cold, and to manage 80 wives and their 140 sons, Hu Sihui deemed better to cite ancient and religious authorities rather than yin, yang, and the five agents.

It remains for future research to analyze the medical properties of each of the ingredients of each recipe in *Yinshan zhengyao* to see whether they have a specific neutralizing effect on the nature of the pathological physiology (a tricky and probably thankless task). For now it is interesting to note that of the fifty recipes in "Foods that Cure the Various Illnesses," eight use salty fermented black beans and some twenty add the five spices—not in the list of ingredients, but as part of the cooking instructions. Thus whether or not the list of ingredients can be shown to have a neutralizing or smoothing effect on the pathology through the balance action of "sapors," in the final analysis the "taste" of these medical dishes must be adjusted to the average late medieval Chinese palate. Five spice typically includes fennel, Chinese Cinnamon [acrid and heating, poisonous], Sichuan pepper [acrid and heating, poisonous], star anise, and clove. With such a powerful combination of seasonings, Hu Sihui's intention was not to serve insipid or flavorless fare at the emperor's table.

We have entered another realm of discourse about flavor that is brought out later, and most strikingly through Li Shizhen's sixteenth-century palate. Li Shizhen was a gourmet par excellence. That his culinary knowledge and experience brought shape, structure and culture to *Bencao gangmu* is evident in the ease with which we can distinguish broad categories of culinary and medical remedy and remark. It is evident in his tasty remedies and in the pervasive language of pleasure and disgust, a language that derives from a wider aesthetic appreciation of nourishing and pleasurable food and that is distinct from the medicalized treatment of the potent essence of a food, its "qi" and "sapor."

To establish definitively, the degree and depth to which scholarly knowledge of the medical properties of food, or medical cuisine diffused into society at different times, is a complex task that will take time. For now we can say that the evidence for the transmission of knowledge in the opposite direction is stronger. Medical writers not only copied from ancient authorities, influential authors also took the evidence of their own and regional kitchens seriously, committing it to academic treatises. They favored the gentle power of food remedies and appropriated culinary knowledge to their remedies. But in practice the application of dietary medicine was a less schematic affair, no doubt moderated by a messy and eclectic kind of

kitchen empiricism and a practical knowledge of fine flavor, whether it concerned coaxing a dying child to eat, keeping the sheep's intestines away from the plums, or inspiring rhapsodies of delight in a worldly naturalist.

Note

1. Tomb M1 was excavated in 1999. Wu Yang was one of the first generation of the family of the marquises of Yuanling. He was ennobled in 187 BCE and died in 162. I am grateful to Zhang Chunlong 張春龍 for an unpublished report.

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CHAPTER NINE

Buddhist Vegetarianism in China

John Kieschnick

Vegetarianism is perhaps the most important contribution Buddhism has made to Chinese cuisine.[1] Today, Buddhist monks and nuns in China are expected to maintain a vegetarian diet, and as far one can tell, in general they take the prohibition seriously, abstaining from all forms of meat, fish, and eggs. There is more flexibility for the Buddhist laity in China. They are not required to be lifelong vegetarians and, while many are, some choose to keep to a semi-vegetarian diet, or adopt a vegetarian diet for a limited period of time. From at least the thirteenth century, the demands of a vegetarian Buddhist community have spawned vegetarian restaurants in Chinese cities and inspired the creation of a distinctive vegetarian cuisine, complete with various sorts of imitation meats as well as strict avoidance of alcohol, garlic, and onions—all linked to the avoidance of meat in Buddhist vegetarianism. Vegetarianism has in recent decades become a focus of attention among lay Chinese Buddhists, and the number of Buddhist vegetarian restaurants both in China and abroad has grown steadily, supported by a sizeable industry that manufactures vegetarian products. Buddhist vegetarianism has exerted influence on other religious movements in China as well, encouraging millions of Chinese to adopt a vegetarian diet on the basis of religious beliefs. For the moment, Buddhism is closely associated with vegetarianism in China and is an important part of Buddhist identity—monks, nuns, and to a lesser extent the laity daily affirm their beliefs and distinguish themselves from others by their diet. But this link was not inevitable. In fact, the importance given to vegetarianism throughout Chinese Buddhist history stands out as an anomaly in the history of Buddhism in Asia as a whole.

In many parts of the world, Buddhist monks today are not vegetarians. Because of Chinese influence, most Vietnamese and Korean monks and nuns keep to a vegetarian diet. In medieval times, Japanese monks were vegetarians, but have since abandoned vegetarianism except during monastic training (Jaffe 2001). Tibetan monks too in general eat meat. Elsewhere, in

areas outside of the Chinese cultural sphere, vegetarianism has never been a requirement for Buddhist monks; in Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand, meat is a part of the monastic diet, and while vegetarianism is not unheard of, monks and laypeople are not in general expected to be vegetarian. As we see below, while some relatively late Indian Buddhist texts promote a strict vegetarian diet, members of the early monastic community in India almost certainly ate meat, though with restrictions on types of meat and the way in which it was acquired. One of the puzzles of Chinese Buddhist history, then, is why Chinese Buddhists adopted vegetarianism with such enthusiasm, a decision that had repercussions on millions of Chinese and on the cultures surrounding China as well. Here I attempt to provide some clues for the answer to the puzzle, and to outline the overall history of vegetarianism in Chinese Buddhism from its emergence in the fourth century until late imperial times.

The Indian Heritage

The two major canonical sources for Chinese Buddhists to assess the propriety of eating meat were the monastic regulations and a number of Mahayana scriptures. These two types of texts, emerging at different times and written in different styles, espoused contradictory views on the propriety of eating meat.

The monastic regulations, according to tradition dictated by the Buddha himself, have always been a primary source for Chinese monks attempting to determine the proper Buddhist diet. The accurate transmission of these regulations was of great concern to Chinese monks from early days. We have evidence for the entry of Buddhism to China from the latter half of the first century, but for the first two hundred years or so of the Buddhist monastic order in China, monks were mostly foreign in origin, living in relatively isolated communities. From the mid-300s on, however, the number of Chinese monks and nuns grew steadily, making the need for clear, written prescriptions for daily life increasingly urgent. Chinese monks were aware that detailed regulations for how monks were to live, including proper diet, were available in Indian texts that had not yet found their way to China. While recognizing that discrepancies existed between different sets of monastic regulations promoted by different Indian schools, Chinese monks believed that these texts contained the words of the Buddha and hence could provide definitive answers to questions about all manner of problems arising in the day-to-day life of monks and nuns, including the question of what they were to eat.

By the early part of the fifth century, the versions of the monastic regulations that were to have the greatest impact on Buddhist practice in China had finally been brought to China and skillfully translated into Chinese. According to these lengthy texts, the Buddha did allow his disciples to eat meat, provided that they did not kill the animals themselves and that the animals were not killed expressly for them. This policy was formulated

under the heading of the "three types of pure meat," meaning meat that was considered acceptable, or "pure," according to three criteria.[2] The two sets of monastic regulations that were most influential in China, the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* and the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, emerging originally from two different schools of Buddhism in ancient India, give similar accounts of the Buddha's stance on the issue. According to the *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, when an enthusiastic convert to Buddhism began donating large amounts of high quality meat to the Buddha's disciples, "because the monks practiced austerities, attempting to reduce their desires and make do with little, they felt ashamed and so brought the case before the Buddha." The Buddha then assembled his disciples and explained the rules they were to follow henceforth:

> There are three types of unclean meat that should not be eaten. What are these three? If one has seen, heard or suspected. What is meant by "seen?" This means that one has seen that a life has been taken for one's sake. This is what is meant by "seen." What is meant by "heard?" This means that one has heard from a reliable person that the animal has been killed for one's sake. This is what is meant by "heard." What is meant by "suspected?" This means that one has cause for suspicion. If there is no butcher in the area and the animal has not died of itself, it must be that the donor has carried out the evil deed and taken the life for one's sake. This is what is meant by "suspected." These three types of unclean meat are not to be eaten.

The Buddha then goes on to say that if the three conditions are met—that is, if a monk has no reason to believe that the animals were killed for him—he should accept the donation and eat the meat. Finally, the Buddha explains that monks are not to eat meat prepared as sacrifice because "this meat was prepared for the gods."[3]

The same two sets of regulations contain discussion of various types of animal flesh that monks are to avoid. Monks, the Buddha proclaims, are not to eat elephant, horse, serpent, dog, or human meat. Such proscriptions suggest that monks commonly consumed other kinds of meat. The reasons given for proscribing the types of meat in this peculiar list of forbidden flesh are equally telling. Monks are not to eat elephant or horse meat because both come from animals used by rulers. They are not to eat snake meat because to do so would offend the powerful *naga* gods who belong to the serpent family. And monks are not to eat dog meat because to do so would reduce their position in the eyes of "people of standing"—only men from the lower professions, the text explains, ate such meat.[4] In all of these prohibitions against eating particular types of animals, the fear was of the social or physical repercussions for monks.

According to one account, the question of whether or not monks were to be allowed to eat human meat arose when a generous donor cut off some of his own flesh for a sick monk who could only be cured by meat.

And while the point of the story is that monks were henceforth forbidden to eat human meat, the story reflects a general belief, expressed elsewhere in the regulations as well, that certain illnesses were best cured by the consumption of flesh. That is, as long as the meat used was not of a forbidden type such as elephant or human flesh, Indian monks considered eating meat for medicinal purposes not only acceptable, but necessary.

Not only do the monastic regulations offer no prohibitions against eating most types of animal flesh, they at times even criticize vegetarians for their ostentation. Devadatta, renowned as one of the wickedest monks of Buddhist history and credited with repeated attempts to assassinate the Buddha, at one point attempted to wrest control of the early monastic community from the Buddha by proposing five ascetic practices through which, he claimed, monks could attain nirvana. Namely, followers of Devadatta were to wear only garments made of rags, obtain food only by begging, eat only once per day, live in the open, refuse all shelter, and refuse to eat meat (*Shi song lü*, 4.24b–c). The point of the passage is not to condemn vegetarianism per se; rather, it is to demonstrate Devadatta's extremism and to highlight the Buddha's relatively moderate stance on asceticism in general: enlightenment cannot be achieved through obsessive self-denial. Nonetheless, the story illustrates just how far the early monastic community in India was from adherence to vegetarianism.

The dating of Indian Buddhist texts is notoriously difficult. In general, however, we can assume that the monastic regulations I drew on above represent the views of the early monastic community, whereas Mahayana texts appeared some centuries later. Unlike the monastic regulations, these texts, markedly different in content and style, show signs that some Buddhist monks in India eventually came to insist on a vegetarian diet. One of the most popular of the Mahayana texts to address the question of vegetarianism was the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, translated twice in the early fifth century. At one point in this scripture, the Buddha delivers a sermon on selflessness, saying that the highest gift is that of a man who, though he himself has taken up ascetic practice and keeps no servants, is yet happy to give servants to others, and though he himself takes no pleasure in meat, is still happy to give meat to others. The Buddha's disciple Kāśyapa, foremost of the Buddha's disciples in asceticism, then objects saying that to give meat to someone else encourages them to commit an improper act. Pleased, the Buddha announces:

> "Excellent, excellent, good son! You have well discerned my intent. This is how the way of the bodhisattva should be preserved, good son. From this time forth I decree that my disciples shall not be permitted to eat meat. Even when other foods are given to monks, they are to consider eating it like eating the flesh of their own children. How could I allow my disciples to eat meat! All of the buddhas say that eating meat destroys one's capacity for great compassion." Kāśyapa then asked the Buddha, "Why World-Honored-One did you previously

> allow eating meat that is pure according to the three conditions?" The Buddha answered Kāśyapa, "I spoke of meat under these three conditions as a provisional regulation that suited the circumstances at that time."

The Buddha goes on to say that the same applies to his previous prohibitions against certain types of meat. Again, he explains, these statements were made because his disciples at that time were incapable of carrying out the more difficult but ultimately correct practice of vegetarianism. Kāśyapa then asks for further clarification. If monks are not to accept offerings of meat, can they accept milk products, sesame oil, silk, shells, or leather.[5] To this the Buddha replies that his disciples are not to adopt the views of extreme ascetics; it was enough to avoid the eating of animal flesh. Later, the Buddha insists that monks are not to eat meat even when the animal has died of natural causes, stressing the point that moral culpability lies not just with the butcher, but with whoever eats the meat. This is followed by a justification for vegetarianism, in which the Buddha notes that creatures fear carnivores, and that, just as people despise men who smell like garlic, so too do they despise and fear the "smell of murder." Finally, Kāśyapa asks the Buddha what monks, nuns, and the laity are to do if they beg for food in a kingdom in which meat is mixed in with other food. The Buddha replies that monks should wash the food and separate the meat from the other food. When this is not possible, they may eat the meat after pressing out the juice so that the meat has no flavor.[6]

While modern scholarship accepts that the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* was composed after the monastic regulations I cited earlier, Chinese Buddhists were not aware of the fact and believed that all of these texts represented the authentic words of the Buddha. Some twenty years after the translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, in 443, the translation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* appeared, adding support to the vegetarian position. In the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the bodhisattva Mahāmati asks the Buddha to speak on the propriety of eating meat. The Buddha replies with a long disquisition in which he gives a litany summarizing the "countless reasons" why Buddhists should not eat meat.[7]

First of all, in the never-ending cycle of life and death, the Buddha explains, the animals we eat may in a past life have been our relatives. Moreover, butchers mix up various sorts of meat, including unclean meats such as dog, horse, and human meat. Eating meat produces a foul smell that inspires fear in all beings. Eating meat inhibits the faculty of compassion. Eating meat is a filthy, smelly habit that damages one's reputation. Eating meat renders spells and incantations ineffective. Meat causes bad breath and nightmares. In the forest the smell of meat attracts tigers and wolves. Meat-eating leads to intemperance. An affection for meat makes it more difficult for the practitioner to concentrate on his practice. Finally, the Buddha concludes, one should not derive pleasure from food, but should regard eating any food as being as repulsive as eating the flesh of one's own son, or like taking a necessary but bitter medicine. "There is no excuse for eating meat."

Some of these reasons we have seen before, such as the argument that meat-eating affects one's capacity for compassion and that the smell of meat is disagreeable. Other arguments, for example that meat causes nightmares and leads to gluttony, are new. In any event, the prohibition on eating meat here is unequivocal. Regardless of whether or not the meat was killed for one, Buddhists are not to eat meat.

Some time after the *Laṅkāvatāra*, probably toward the end of the fifth century, another scripture, the *Scripture of Brahma's Net*, began to circulate in China, insisting once again that disciples of the Buddha were not to eat any type of meat, for to do so would eliminate their capacity for compassion (*Fanwang jing*, 2.1005b). The provenance of this text is suspect and, though it claims to be a translation from an Indian original, it may well have been written in China. Nonetheless, for our purposes the important point is that in the fifth century it was considered by many to be an authentic scripture, containing the words of the Buddha which called on Buddhists to adopt a vegetarian diet.

These three texts—the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and the *Brahma's Net*—were all familiar to leading monks and interested lay people from the time of their appearance to modern times, and so provided ample scriptural support for Chinese Buddhists who argued in favor of vegetarianism.[8]

In addition to meat, these Mahayana texts also condemned the consumption of garlic, onions, and other strong flavors. At first, the combination of these two prohibitions—meat and onions—seems odd, until we appreciate that meat, like onions, was often described as unclean.[9] While not forbidding all forms of meat, even the monastic regulations insist, for instance, that monks should not eat dog meat because it is unclean; similarly, the *Laṅkāvatāra* describes meat in general as filthy and smelly. This concern for purity in diet is most clearly apparent in the prohibitions against garlic, onions, and other "strong flavors" in many of the same texts just discussed. The prohibition of such foods has been an integral part of Buddhist vegetarianism from very early on, and even today Chinese vegetarian chefs scrupulously avoid the use of garlic and onions. While the monastic regulations transmitted to China have little to say about onions, they agree that monks are not to eat garlic, botanically a member of the onion family. The *Sarvāstivādavinaya*, for example, tells the story of a monk who, because he had just eaten garlic and did not want to offend the Buddha and a visiting king, did not attend one of the Buddha's sermons. The Buddha then scolds the monk for preferring garlic to the Dharma and establishes the rule that monks are not to eat garlic, unless it is necessary to treat an illness (*Shi song lü*, 38.275b; *Si fen lü*, 52.956b). The presence of a king in this story hints at the social ramifications of eating garlic; perhaps, as in the case of dog meat, garlic marked the lower professions and was avoided by people of high social status. But this is never more than a hint. In general, the Buddha's chief objection to garlic is its smell. In one text, the Buddha emphasizes just how potent garlic is by establishing the rule that once a monk violates the

precept against eating garlic, he must for seven days stay away from the bathhouse, lecture hall, and other communal spaces in the monastery. At the end of seven days he is to carefully wash all his belongings and bathe himself thoroughly before rejoining communal life in the monastery *Mishasaibu hexi wufen lü*, 26.176a).

It was only with the three influential texts calling for complete vegetarianism, however, that the prohibition against garlic along with several other pungent plants was linked to the prohibition against meat. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa* describes the proper Buddhist disciple as one who "when begging for food or eating with other monks is temperate and does not ask for more, does not eat meat or drink wine, and because the flavor of the 'five pungent plants' (*wuxin* 五辛) permeates its surroundings, does not eat them. For this reason, he does not smell."[10] The *Brahma's Net* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* give similar prohibitions, including proscriptions against the "five pungent plants."[11] The texts differ on precisely what these five plants are, and it is difficult now, through Chinese translations of Indic terms, to identify them with modern terminology. The *Brahma's Net* lists garlic, three types of onions, and *asafetida*, while the *Laṅkāvatāra* gives the vaguer "onions, and all types of chives and garlic and such." In China, the most important of the five were garlic, onions, and "Chinese chives" (*jiucai* 韭蔡) all common ingredients in Chinese cuisine, which, under the influence of these texts, are strictly avoided in Chinese vegetarian cooking. A later text gave the rationale that pungent plants like garlic stimulate the passions (*Dafoding*, 8.141c), but in texts translated by the fifth century in China, the only reason for avoiding these plants along with meat and wine is their disagreeable smell.

In addition to this concern for purity, we have also seen the notion that vegetarianism represents a form of asceticism and self-denial, since meat in ancient India was considered a delicacy of great sensual appeal. More surprisingly, in their discussions of vegetarianism, the Buddhist texts that came to China show little concern for animal welfare. In the monastic regulations, certain types of meat are banned either out of fear of reprisal from protectors of these animals—whether the kings who kept horses, or the nagas who protected serpents—or because eating certain animals, such as dogs, carried social stigma. Further, in discussion of the three conditions under which a monk may accept a donation of meat, the chief concern is that the monk not bear the karmic responsibility of killing the animal, rather than the suffering of the animal itself. It was accepted as doctrine that to kill an animal incurs bad karma, but in the passages discussed above, the monk's only concern was to avoid this bad karma, not to prevent the killing of animals per se. Even in the texts that call for complete vegetarianism and list "compassion" as one reason, the focus remains on the effects of meat-eating on the individual's capacity for compassion, that is, his ability to cultivate the virtue of compassion in himself, rather than on the suffering of animals. In other words, concern for animal welfare—not to mention other modern motivations for vegetarianism such as environmental impact and

health (Singer 1990; Telfer 1996)—is for the most part absent from discussion of vegetarianism in Indian Buddhism.

In sum, by the end of the fifth century, the Indian heritage provided Chinese Buddhists with two basic options to help them decide which type of food was proper enough for them to eat; the Buddha's pronouncements in the monastic regulations and in the Mahayana scriptures contradict each other. Hence, Chinese monks could conceivably have adopted the limited prohibitions of the monastic regulations, in which case vegetarianism would have been nothing more than a brief phase in the history of Buddhism, adopted by a small number of monks long ago in India, soon abandoned for a less stringent diet with only a few basic prohibitions on what sorts of meat monks were to eat. On the contrary a number of factors contributed to the decision, to adopt a vegetarian diet, the most prominent among them being the prestige in China of the three scriptures that called for vegetarianism, attitudes toward meat and vegetarianism in place before Buddhism entered China, and the efforts of Chinese laymen and emperor Wu 武 of the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–49) to promote vegetarianism.

The Formation of Buddhist Vegetarianism in China

Vegetarianism was not unheard of before the entrance of Buddhism to China, but it seems for the most part to have been limited to the period of mourning after the death of a relative as an expression of sorrow and self-restraint. This aspect of vegetarianism reflects commonly held associations between meat and luxury. In premodern China, regular consumption of large amounts of meat was traditionally the preserve of the wealthy. Even today in China, though meat is accessible to many more than in the past, many of the most elaborate feasts are composed almost entirely of meat products, with very few vegetable dishes and no rice, as a sign of the generosity of the host and extravagance of the meal.

What is a sign of status and privilege for the well-to-do is, conversely, a sign of decadence and gluttony for their critics. We have seen the same tendency in Indian Buddhist texts in which one of the reasons given for vegetarianism is an aversion to the indulgence in sensual pleasure that eating meat represented. The same dynamics were at work in ancient China, as reflected in the term "meat-eaters" (*roushizhe* 肉食者) applied to the ruling class, and in the word that most closely approximated vegetarianism, *sushi* 素食, literally "plain eating." It is not surprising then that most references to vegetarianism in ancient Chinese texts before the entrance of Buddhism are related to periods of mourning, when, in addition to abstaining from meat, one was also to abstain from fine clothing and entertainment (Chang 1977, 43; Kang 2001, 30–31).

I mentioned earlier that while Indian Buddhist texts state that the killing of animals is wrong, their focus is on the consequences of killing for the

individual who consumes them rather than on the suffering of animals. In pre-Buddhist China, abstention from meat is even further from such ethical concerns; for the ancient Chinese, butchering animals was in general considered entirely natural and unproblematic. We can find a few examples of ambivalence toward killing animals, as in a famous anecdote in *Mencius* that describes a king who cannot bear to allow the sacrifice of an animal that he has personally seen, but such sentiments are not in general linked to vegetarianism (Lau 1983, 54–55). And even in the *Mencius* passage, the point is to criticize the king who, according to Mencius, is excessively sensitive to the suffering of animals and callous towards the suffering of his own people. In short, before the arrival of Buddhism, although some abstained from meat on specific occasions as an expression of self-denial, sustained vegetarianism over a long period of time was rare, and what vegetarianism did exist did not stem from ethical arguments over the propriety of killing animals for their flesh.

At about the same time as scriptures calling on monks to adopt a vegetarian diet appeared in China, we begin to get descriptions of monks—Chinese and foreign—who refused to eat meat, suggesting that the fashion for vegetarianism among some Indian Buddhists had spread to China. The *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, compiled in approximately 530, contains dozens of references to monks who were lifelong vegetarians (Suwa 1988, 41–63). Many of these references are to monks who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries. To answer the question of who was behind the shift to complete vegetarianism in sixth-century China—monks, rulers, or lay devotees—it would help to know just how common vegetarianism was among monks in the first few centuries of Buddhism in China, but this is difficult to determine since most of the accounts we have of monks during that period were compiled in the sixth century and so may simply reflect the sixth-century idea that monks should not eat meat; a common feature of hagiography is to make saints of men of the past according to the standards of the author's rather than the subject's day. The tendency in early accounts of monks to emphasize vegetarianism, moreover, shows that vegetarianism was still considered unusual enough to merit mention. Hence, from the fact that biographies especially mention the strict vegetarianism of a few eminent monks, we can infer that most monks before the sixth century were probably not strict vegetarians. In later centuries, as vegetarianism became more common, references to it in biographies of monks decrease as it came to be taken for granted and no longer a sign of particular sincerity or dedication (Kang 2002, 61).

Biographies of monks in the early period of Chinese Buddhism often describe them as "keeping a vegetarian diet and wearing only coarse garments," or as "keeping to a vegetarian diet and enduring exquisite austerities," disclosing the tendency we have already seen in scripture to associate vegetarianism with self-sacrifice and simple living. At times, however, accounts from the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* allude to the ethical component behind the decision to give up meat. The biography of the prominent

monk Zhidun 支遁 (292–345), known for his doctrinal expertise, familiarity with literati culture, and ready wit, describes Zhidun's decision to renounce eggs as follows:

> Once, when Zhidun was young, he discussed the classification of things with his teacher. Zhidun argued that the use of a chicken egg once it had been laid was not tantamount to taking life, and his teacher could not convince him otherwise. When his teacher died, he suddenly appeared before Zhidun, and cast an egg on the ground. The shell cracked open, and a chick emerged. In an instant both [the vision of the teacher and of the chick] disappeared. At this point Zhidun was awakened [to the error of his view] and from then on kept to a vegetarian diet for the rest of his life. (*Gaoseng zhuan*, 4.349b–c)

Again we cannot determine if this is an accurate account of a real event in the life of the historical figure Zhidun, or if it is a later legend. In any event, the story no doubt reflects the sorts of debates that must have taken place between monks in China on the precise content of Buddhist vegetarianism (the scriptures say nothing about the propriety of eating eggs). It also shows that, in addition to an aversion to gluttony and decadence, ethical concerns over what constitutes life were also a driving force behind the decision to renounce meat. The excitement caused by the appearance of scriptures calling for complete vegetarianism is reflected as well in a commentary to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, compiled in the fifth century, containing the comments of ten prominent monks, including the leading monastic thinker Daosheng 道生, with extensive discussion of the passages of the sutra that refer to vegetarianism.[12]

Curiously, and perhaps more important than the efforts of monks to promote vegetarianism, were the efforts of lay Buddhists (Lavoix 2002). In the fourth and fifth centuries, enthusiastic storytellers circulated a large corpus of accounts of animals with human characteristics. Inspired by Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth, these stories recount how the spirits of turtles, dogs, fish, and other animals exact revenge on those who eat them, and reward the virtuous few who spare them (Campany 1996, 384–93). Such beliefs attracted some lay people to a more formal, institutionalized form of vegetarianism in which they refused to eat meat on certain designated days. Laymen were not, of course, constrained by the monastic regulations. They in general showed little interest in the monastic regulations and, in theory, were not supposed to read them. Although not as elaborate as monastic regulations, rules for lay Buddhists called upon them to practice the "five precepts" of the layman; namely, to avoid killing, stealing, lascivious conduct, lying, and alcohol. The practice of "killing" did not necessarily imply vegetarianism, since one could, like many monks, simply eat the meat of animals slaughtered by others. In addition, the five precepts were not applied to the laity with the same rigor as the monastic regulations that were applied to monks. Nonetheless, in the context of special days set aside for the maintenance of

the five precepts, vegetarianism seems to have been practiced in India. Chinese Buddhists learned of the custom much earlier in the early fourth century with the translation of the *Lalitavistarasūtra*, which calls on laypeople to keep the five precepts during the first half of three months in addition to six other days in each month.[13] This scripture does not specify whether lay people are to maintain a vegetarian diet during these days, or if they are simply not to kill animals themselves. However the practice was understood in India, the fourth-century Chinese layman Xi Chao 希超 understood it to mean vegetarianism, listing the "three months and six days," and stating that "On all such fast days one is not to serve fish or meat" (*Feng fa yao*, 86b).

The appearance of Mahayana scriptures like the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, and the *Laṅkāvatāra* in the fifth century further stirred the enthusiasm of the literate laity in China, who took to the practice of vegetarianism with unprecedented rigor, not just for special occasions, but in many cases for life. One of the most famous and influential laymen to promote vegetarianism was the official Zhou Yong 周顒 (d.488) who composed a letter to his friend He Yin 何因, already a partial vegetarian, encouraging him to renounce all meat eating. Zhou mentions some of the concerns we have already seen, such as the karmic consequences of eating meat, but shows more concern for the suffering of animals than we see in canonical material and, just as important for the spread of vegetarianism in China, couches the argument in the vocabulary of the literatus, addressing the question of the tradition of meat-eating in early China and a rationale for vegetarianism derived from the Chinese classics. The letter, one of several such elegant essays on vegetarianism from the period, runs as follows:

> Perhaps the error that has kept you from the loftiest state of cultivation is that you are not completely vegetarian. The practices of cleaning and trimming, cooking and hunting have been recorded since distant times. Who would dare dispute them? If we examine the use of fine meats by the sages, we see that they established hierarchies. At the beginning, the first people ate [raw] flesh together with feathers and blood. If unrestrained, men know no limits.
>
> How can gentlemen of good intentions not embrace reciprocity and bring peace to the border [that divides men from beasts], so that neither harms the other? There is, moreover, no change greater than the change from life to death, no aspect of life more important than life itself. [For the animal] it is its life at stake, and it holds to it dearly; for us it is a flavor, something we can do without.
>
> Yet our entire lives we eat [flesh] at every meal to nourish ourselves, while [animals] harbor resentments they cannot express. My karma stretches back such a long way. Alas, how frightening it is! Yet how easy it is to dote on a tiny, delicate egg in all its frailty; how simple to pity the tender fawn as it takes its cautious steps. Watching animals drink and eat, fly and swim, we feel compassion for them. How can we want

to club them to death and eat them so casually? When herds of livestock form, we fence them tightly in, take measure of their flesh and fur, waiting for the day when we can cut them apart "like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground."[14] All say that this is perfectly normal. What a pity it is! Is there no other way?

If the principle of the "three times" is wrong [that is, if there is no karmic connection between past, present and future lives], then fortune is with you and all is well. But if this teaching [of karma and reincarnation] is true, and we are reborn into new forms in an endless succession, then we ceaselessly come and go with life and death, and rebirth is constant. Receiving various forms of karmic retribution is like being at home, while [leading lives as] men or gods is like being a guest: we spend less time as guests than we do at home. We believe in karma, but are incapable of avoiding its consequences. What sadness and pain, for the consequences of our actions know no end.

Although you do not personally slaughter living creatures, you cannot resist supplying your butcher with geese and carp. A moral man rejects goods that have passed through the hands of bandits. When a life is given over to the knife, how can a compassionate heart bear it? The *zouyu* 騶虞 even when hungry will only eat herbs that have died of themselves. On hearing of its virtue, can one help but feel shame? All creatures receive a given form, a storage house for their skin and flesh. All comes from compounded delusion, flowing on like the water of a river that cannot reverse its course. We are born into filth and pollution, and make a long, sour journey through a world of suffering. The sweetness and fat [of flesh] only cause the consequences of ignorance to accumulate. How can you continue to sully your belly with oily meats? You have long understood this. I am merely with a few remarks reminding you of what you know to be true.[15]

Of particular note here are Zhou's reference to the *zouyu*, a fabulous beast mentioned in classics such as the Book of Odes, admired for its compassion, which according to some commentators included a refusal to eat meat or even kill plants for food. References like these—the rhetoric of the classics—were essential if the literati, among the most influential members of society, were to be convinced of any argument (Lavoix 2002, 135–41). Further, unlike arguments made in the monastic regulations, Zhou argues for the complicity of the meat-eater in the slaughter of animals, even when it is carried out by a butcher and not for a specific consumer. Equally important is Zhou's description of "delicate eggs" and "tender fawns." This tendency to emphasize the helplessness of animals—something we do not see in early Buddhist texts—became a staple of vegetarian propaganda by laymen and monks alike, and, since it shifts focus from the karmic culpability of the individual to animals in general, contributed to campaigns to enforce vegetarianism even on those willing to take their karmic chances on a carnivorous diet. The same motifs run through the equally famous essay by

Shen Yue 沈約, "Treatise on Ultimate Compassion," in which Shen argues against the use of silk, which involves killing silk worms as well as against meat-eating.[16] Shen too speaks of the need to feel compassion for other beings. He too couches his essay in the language of the literati, with reference to passages in the Chinese classics that he construes (with little justification) as supporting vegetarianism. Clearly influenced by the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, Shen explains that the contradiction between the Buddha's position in these texts and others which allow for eating meat, was one of the Buddha's expedient devices, employed because the Buddha knew that some audiences could not accept complete vegetarianism.

Zhou Yong's letter and Shen Yue's essay reflect the interest in vegetarianism by Buddhist laymen in the early 500s, a vegetarianism concerned both with the karmic consequences of eating meat which, they believed, made them complicit in the taking of life, and with animal welfare more generally, a stance which led them to object to hunting, animal sacrifice and meat-eating by others as well. Thus the elements of a more evangelical vegetarianism were in place. Beyond reflecting the general ambience of the time, Zhou and Shen had a direct influence on the court of emperor Wu of the Liang who was to contribute more than any other individual to establishing vegetarianism as the norm in Chinese Buddhism.[17] Shen Yue was close friends with the Prince of Jingling, Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (d. 494), himself a proponent of vegetarianism, who in turn had a major influence on the future emperor Wu of the Liang.[18] And the son of Zhou Yong served at Wu's court where he argued publicly in favor of a ban on hunting (Lavoix 2002, 119).

Emperor Wu of the Liang, who ruled from 502 to 549, expressed his devotion to Buddhism early on in his reign, taking the "bodhisattva vows" of a layman in a public ceremony in 519. A few years earlier, according to his biographers, he had already become a vegetarian, renouncing all forms of meat and fish and dining exclusively on vegetables, fruit and grains. Soon after this decision, the emperor issued a decree in which he forbade animal sacrifice in the temple for the imperial family. This was followed by a petition from two leading monks that the emperor forbid hunting and fishing, as well, in two regions near the capital, which despite the objections of some of his officials, the emperor accepted. In his campaign against hunting and fishing the emperor was following on the precedent established by the great Indian Buddhist king Aśoka. Emperor Wu's ban also established a precedent that was later followed by a similar ban during the Tang.[19] But despite Wu's efforts, China as a whole never became a vegetarian country; vegetarianism in China was never as prevalent as it was to become in India, and the impact of this limited edict on hunting and fishing in Chinese history was minimal. His subsequent efforts were, however, a determining factor in establishing vegetarianism as the norm for Buddhist monks and nuns.

The exact chronology of events is contested, but we can safely say that sometime between 518 and 523, the emperor called a grand monastic assembly in the Hualin Basilica 華林殿, inviting more than a thousand leading monks and nuns, including Huichao 慧超, officially the highest ranking

monk in the empire, and hundreds of other eminent monks known for exegesis.[20] Two of the most prominent among them were asked to take the "high seats" while the emperor, along with the other monks in attendance, sat on the ground on mats before them in the magnificent palace grounds. The audience first listened to a sermon on the section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, discussed above, that lays out the Buddha's condemnation of meat-eating. After this, another leading monk took the lecture seat and spoke on the "Essay for the Renunciation of Meat," composed by the emperor himself. In this essay, the emperor begins with a caveat explaining that it is justifiable at times for a secular figure to intervene in what should normally be an internal monastic affair. Much of the text is a tirade against the monastic community in which the emperor first insists that by eating meat Buddhist monks are no better than—and in fact inferior to—followers of other teachings. Followers of other teachings at the very least are not hypocrites, like the monks in Wu's day who, he claims, preach on sutras calling for vegetarianism, but eat meat in secret. What is more, he continues, monks are even inferior in their practice to lay Buddhists, because, for instance, even lay Buddhists who do eat meat do not sully sacred monastic grounds, and are not violating monastic precepts. And laymen at the least spend their own money on their meat, while monks buy flesh with donations from pious devotees. At the heart of his criticism is the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of karma and the belief that it is the responsibility of monks to maintain the highest standards for implementing Buddhist teachings. Having addressed nine reasons why meat-eating monks are worse than followers of other teachings, and nine reasons why they are inferior even to laymen, the emperor gives a long list of the consequences of meat-eating. It interferes with meditation, one's capacity for compassion, causes all manner of ulcers, hemorrhoids, eye and ear problems and so forth. Most of these reasons we have already seen in the Mahayana scriptures calling for vegetarianism. He then turns to a curious medical defense of vegetarianism, in which he explains that a common objection to vegetarianism is that meat is nourishing ("hot") whereas vegetables are depleting ("cold"), a notion that remains influential to this day. The emperor counters that this is a gross oversimplification, since in fact at times meat can be depleting and vegetables nourishing. In general, he insists, strength comes not from meat but from vegetables, and it is meat that saps away this strength. Finally, he concludes by noting that beneficent gods are repelled by the smell of meat, while demons are attracted to it. After the recitation of this text in the presence of the Emperor, the monks were called to make obeisance, perform a rite of confession and were then dismissed.

Despite this impressive display of imperial pressure, many monks remained unconvinced. According to the seventh-century text that describes these events, the *Guang hongming ji*, immediately after the assembly some monks continued to insist, quite correctly, that there was nothing in the monastic regulations prohibiting meat-eating or describing a ritual of confession for meat-eating. In response, six days after the first assembly, the Emperor

promulgated a new edict, calling for 141 "exegetical monks" and fifty-seven "exegetical nuns" to meet at the Huaguang Basilica 華光殿. This time three "masters of the regulations," that is, monks specializing in the monastic regulations, were ordered to take the high seats and respond directly to the emperor's questions, beginning with the question of how they explained to their disciples why the monastic regulations do not specifically forbid eating meat. The monks, responding to the persistent emperor before an enormous crowd, gave the standard explanation that the Buddha's teachings were designed according to the capacities of his audience. The regulations begin with the prohibition against certain types of animal flesh, followed by the more stringent requirements not to eat meat unless considered pure based on the "three criteria." From this, the monks continued, one can infer that his ultimate teaching was the yet more stringent prohibition on all meat-eating. This, one of the monks explained, is what he taught his own disciples. Not satisfied with this response, the Emperor pressed the monks to explain if there is a contradiction between the sutras and the monastic regulations. The monks attempted various convoluted answers, but were in the end unable to resolve the problem, at which point the increasingly impatient Emperor turned to the monks in the audience for an answer. One of them responded by explaining that after the Buddha preached the scriptures calling for complete vegetarianism he made no further pronouncements on the regulations. But when the Emperor asked the monk whether the Buddha's pronouncements on meat-eating in sutras should be taken as monastic regulations, the monk backed down, reluctant to grant the status of official regulations to quotations from sutras. This is the tenor for the entire debate: the monks reply to the Emperor's questions about contradictions in the scriptures, but can ultimately give no satisfactory answer since the only genuine solution to the problem would be to reject one or other of the scriptures as spurious, a position none of them were willing to take.

In the course of the debate, the monks give answers that reveal the state of vegetarianism among Buddhist monks at the time. At one point, for instance, the Emperor asks the monk Fachao 法超 if monks specializing in the monastic regulations eat meat. Fachao replies that while he cannot speak for others, he himself has never eaten meat. When another of the three monks is asked the same question, he claims never to have eaten meat "except when, as a middle-aged man, he took ill." The third master explains that in two of the monasteries he has lived in, meat was not allowed, but that in other places, the prohibition on meat was relaxed in cases of illness. When pressed, Sengbian 僧辯, the monk who admitted to eating meat when ill, explains that he does not forbid the monks in his monastery from eating meat, as long as it is pure according to the "three criteria."

After what appears to have been an entirely unconvincing conclusion, the Emperor ordered another monk to take the high seat and recite passages from scriptures, including the *Laṅkāvatāra*, that call for complete vegetarianism. At the end of the recitation, the Emperor orders the monks in attendance to return to their monasteries and explain these scriptures to the

"lesser monks" there. After a rite of confession, the assembly was finally dismissed.

Obviously dissatisfied with the results of the assembly (which in the end did little to resolve the conflict between the monastic regulations and the Mahayana scriptures), the Emperor that same night promulgated a series of no less than five edicts, clarifying various points of the morning's debate and insisting that karmic retribution is inevitable for any who eat meat. These events took place in the south at a time when the empire was divided under two rulers, north and south. Approximately fifty years later, in the north, Yuwen Yong 宇文邕, ruler of the Northern Zhou, who unlike Emperor Wu of the Liang, was antipathetic to Buddhism, as part of his rationale for a campaign to limit the influence of Buddhism, noted that Buddhist scriptures allowed monks the "unclean custom" of eating meat pure according to the "three criteria."[21] Whether from supporters or detractors, north or south, the laity now assumed that monks and nuns should not eat meat.

By the end of the sixth century the basic arguments for vegetarianism and sources for scriptural support had all been made. The focus of the debate was on the general problem of karmic culpability for eating animals killed by others, and on the problem of the contradictory stances of various Buddhist scriptures. The public assemblies and debates convened by Emperor Wu of the Liang were, in retrospect, inconclusive. As none of the participants was willing to challenge the authenticity of either the monastic regulations or the Mahayana sutras, the contradiction in their position on meat-eating continued to plague the debate, despite repeated recourse to the theory that the Buddha proposed different teachings at different times to suit the abilities of his audience. Concern for the suffering of animals was not an important issue in these debates, though it does appear for the first time in some lay writings from the period.

In the end, the fight for a vegetarian clergy in China was not won by conclusive reasoning. Nor do the pronouncements of Emperor Wu of the Liang seem to have been the decisive factor. After all, he convoked the second assembly on meat-eating after discovering that monks were unconvinced by the first; and as the contents of the second offered no fundamentally new arguments, it seems likely that many monks remained convinced of the propriety of eating meat in certain circumstances. The emperor at that time, despite his unprecedented links to the Buddhist clergy, did not have the power to ensure that all monks and nuns keep to a vegetarian diet. The shift to complete vegetarianism happened instead in a more diffuse way, difficult to trace with much precision. One measure of the shift is references to life-long vegetarianism in monastic biographies. Biographies from before the seventh century frequently remark that the monk in question was a vegetarian, but in later biographies such references become increasingly less frequent; by the tenth century they disappear altogether. Curiously, this textual trend reveals its opposite: while, in the sixth century, for a monk to renounce meat was considered a sign of eminence, by the tenth it was considered a minimum requirement of any monk or nun.

One of the most important factors in this transformation was the pressure of the laity, themselves, more influenced by Mahayana texts and popular stories of karmic retribution than by the monastic regulations, who expected monks and nuns to maintain a higher standard for renunciation and rigor. The case of vegetarianism is a good example of the role of the laity and the state in shaping monasticism; in China, as elsewhere, the customs of monks and nuns were closely tied to the society in which they lived, and the efforts of interested lay people to shape their practice.

Vegetarian Proselytism After the Sixth Century

Much of the writing by monks on vegetarianism in the medieval period is preserved in commentaries on Mahayana scriptures we have already seen, usually summarizing the points made in the texts themselves. These include works by some of the most prominent exegetes in Chinese Buddhism, such as Huiyuan 慧遠, Chengguan 澄觀, Fazang 法藏, Kuiji 窺基, and Zhanran 湛然. For the most part, they repeat arguments that we have already seen, explaining, for instance, the discrepancy between the monastic regulations and the Mahayana scriptures as the result of the Buddha's technique of teaching at different levels depending on the capacities of his audience, a mode of interpretation in keeping with general trends in Buddhist exegesis. Some, however, make minor innovations to the arguments for vegetarianism. The seventh-century monk Daoxuan 道宣, for example, in an influential compendium of regulations for monks, makes the logical argument that eating meat is directly linked to the killing of the animal even if the butcher does not slaughter the animal specifically for him. "A butcher," Daoxuan says, "sells only to those who eat meat; if there is no one to eat his meat, he will not slaughter. Thus we see that one who eats meat creates bad karma along with the butcher, and is also stained by the act of killing. Let this serve as warning" (*Sifenlü shanfan buque xingshi chao*, 10.118a). While we have seen this argument in the letter of the sixth-century layman Zhou Yong, Daoxuan seems to be the first Chinese monk to specifically blame the meat-eater for the death of animals slaughtered by the butcher.

Various monks applied their exegetical talents to identifying the "five pungent flavors" listed in Indian scriptures, some of which were not commonly eaten in China. The justification for avoiding these plants was normally simply that they were condemned as impure by the scriptures, but the appearance of a Chinese translation of the *Śūraṃgamasūtra* at the beginning of the eighth century supplied the added reason that such plants functioned as aphrodisiacs (*Dafoding rulai*, 8.141c). The belief that garlic and onions stimulate the passions and hence interfere with meditation and other forms of self-cultivation is now the standard reason Chinese vegetarians give for avoiding them.

Earlier, I emphasized the pressure laymen brought on monks in the formative period of Buddhist vegetarianism in China, but once abstention

from flesh had become the norm, it was monks who urged lay people to adopt the vegetarian diet. It was said that the great Tang exegete Zongmi 宗密 (780–841) convinced many to "abandon professions that harmed living creatures" and to "refrain from eating meat" (*Guifeng Chanshi beiming*, 15a–16a; *Song gaoseng zhuan*, 6.742c). And many similar passages can be found in biographies of monks from the medieval to the modern period. Private correspondence between monks and literati from the late imperial period reveals that in daily conversations, monks promoted the practice among their lay friends and followers (Eichman 2004).

The Development of Lay Vegetarianism

We have already seen a number of examples of prominent lay vegetarians from early medieval times. And we can find occasional references to vegetarians throughout the medieval period even in the official dynastic histories, traditionally averse to Buddhism. The powerful Tang official Li Mi 李泌, for instance, was known for his vegetarianism (*Jiu Tangshu*, 130.3620; *Xin Tangshu*, 139.4631). And the prominent ninth-century poet and Buddhist layman Bai Juyi notes in a biography that the Tang official Li Yuan 李源 was a vegetarian ("You Tang Shan ren," 4a; *Jiu Tangshu*, 187.4889; *Xin Tangshu*, 191.5005).

The practice of abstaining from meat for particular days was institutionalized in the Tang dynasty when, in 619, Emperor Gaozu ordered that for three months in a year and during ten specified days, the slaughter of animals (together with executions) was forbidden. With the exception of a brief two-year period during which Buddhism was persecuted, this ordinance was in force throughout the Tang dynasty, that is, for nearly three hundred years![22]

References to vegetarian restaurants in descriptions of cities, and to vegetarians in biographies and novels confirms that from the sixth century, vegetarianism was reasonably common among Buddhist lay men and women.[23] There is ample evidence, in particular, for vegetarianism, inspired in part by Buddhist belief, by women during the Song dynasty. Many became vegetarians in response to the death of a husband or parent, but others became vegetarians at a young age as the product of a lifelong devotion to Buddhism (Lu 2002).

Because vegetarianism was never the norm, Buddhist vegetarians inevitably encountered social obstacles to their practice. We have already seen the argument that a vegetarian diet was not healthy alluded to in the treatise by Emperor Wu of the Liang, an assumption that must have discouraged many from renouncing meat. The same reservations crop up later on as well, for instance in a twelfth-century text in which a Buddhist layman explains that he cannot maintain a vegetarian diet because of his weak constitution (*Longshu zengguang*, 4.263b, 265b, 279b.). The great eleventh-century historian Sima Guang 司馬光, though he claimed to seldom eat meat out of a desire for simplicity and restraint, insisted that meat was necessary

for a healthy diet, remarking in a letter to a friend, "Wine and meat are necessary during times of weakness and infirmity. They cannot be avoided. You have now abstained from wine and meat and taken only vegetarian fare for some time. This is why you have come down with a 'depleting sickness.' "[24] In the same vein, it was commonly accepted that meat was necessary for especial strength, spawning stories of "fighting monks" who secretly ate meat as a necessary part of their training in the martial arts (Shahar, forthcoming).

But even those who, unconvinced by such arguments, decided to renounce meat still had to contend with social occasions in which meat-eating was expected. A tenth-century account of the high official Gao Pian 高駢 (d. ca. 887) explains, for instance that, while Gao was a vegetarian, when his daughter married, "custom called for the butchering of animals [for the feast]. At first Gao did not want to go along with the idea, but his relatives said, 'You may keep this precept, but [if the same strictures are put on the feast], how will we entertain the guests?' While Gao hesitated, unable to make up his mind, many animals were butchered."[25] According to this Buddhist source, Gao later fell into a delirium during which he met with gods in the underworld who reprimanded him for this slip. But even if we discount the historical accuracy of the story and read it as a legend, it does reflect what must have been commonly held assumptions about the necessity of meat in large public banquets.

Just as the vegetarian was expected to provide meat for his daughter's wedding banquet, he was often passed over when invitations went out for banquets that included meat.[26] Given the necessity of eating meat on social occasions, it is not surprising that certain social positions were thought to require meat-eating as well. That is, while life-long vegetarianism was fine for monks, it was considered eccentric and inappropriate for, for example, high officials. Biographies of the ninth-century official Yang Shou 楊收 explain that as a precocious child he followed the example of his Buddhist mother who did not eat meat, until his mother insisted that, given his rare literary abilities, he would one day pass the civil service examinations and so should eat meat (*Jiu Tangshu*, 177.4598; *Xin Tangshu*, 184.5392). A similar tale from roughly the same period tells of a mysterious monk who visits a boy of seven who had yet to eat meat. Seeing into the boy's future, the monk announces "As you are fond of office and title, why don't you eat meat?" From that day on, we are told, the boy, who later did reach a high official position, ate meat (*Tang yu lin*, 3.320).

On the other hand, vegetarians developed various strategies of accommodation to circumvent awkward encounters with nonvegetarian friends and associates. Some vegetarians considered it acceptable to eat vegetables that had been cooked with meat. They found (or created) precedence for the practice in the story that the "Sixth Patriarch" of Chan Buddhism, Huineng 慧能, ate "vegetables cooked with meat" (*roubian cai* 肉邊菜), a story that first appears in the twelfth-century version of the *Platform Scripture* (*Liuzu dashi*, 1.349c; Cao 2000). Novels from the late imperial period reveal

that it was also common for considerate hosts to prepare special dishes for their vegetarian guests who could then dine with carnivores. At one feast in the great eighteenth-century novel of manners, the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the hostess announces that a "rice and date frumenty" had been prepared for "the ladies who don't eat meat" (Hawkes, 3.43).

Such feasts were complimented by a variety of meat substitutes, the most common of which was gluten, extracted from wheat-flour and then treated in various ways to imitate the texture and even the taste of meat. This practice goes back at least as far as the tenth century when the collection of anecdotes *Beimeng suoyan* was compiled. This text recounts the habits of a ninth-century official named Cui Anqian 崔安潛, a "devout Buddhist who seldom ate meat." At one point in his career when he became more staunch in his vegetarianism, "He prepared a banquet for officials from the various offices, serving foods made of wheat, 'devil's tongue' (*juruo* 蒟蒻, *amorphallus*) and such, dyed and made to look like shoulder of pork, leg of lamb and assorted other meats. They were all remarkably realistic" (*Beimeng suoyan*, 3.57). Later sources testify to the steady popularity of faux meat. At one point in the sixteenth-century novel the *Plum in the Golden Vase*, a woman on a vegetarian diet rejects a dish offered her, saying

> "take this dish of pork ribs away, . . . I'm afraid I might get some into my mouth by mistake." This provoked a hearty laugh from everyone present. "My good lady," said Yueniang, "this is counterfeit nonvegetarian fare sent over from the temple just now. Eat as much as you like. It won't do any harm." "So long as it's really vegetarian fare," said Aunt Yang, "I'll have some of it. My eyes must really be deceiving me. I was sure it was meat." (Roy 1993, 2.432)

Anyone familiar with modern Chinese vegetarian cuisine can testify to the skill in manufacture of meat substitutes. The presence of foods that resemble animal flesh are an interesting barometer of ethics as well, in that they suggest not so much revulsion at the notion of eating meat (there are, for instance, no gluten dishes that imitate human flesh, or the flesh of animals not otherwise consumed), as they do a desire to acquire merit by renouncing the pleasures of eating meat.

The creation of meat substitutes was in part in response to the needs of a laity that kept a vegetarian diet only on particular days, and wished to maintain their standard diet throughout. While this practice seems to be rooted in the Indian Buddhist tradition of maintaining the lay precepts on the first half of three months and on six other special days each month, in China the laity eventually adopted the practice with great flexibility, setting aside certain vegetarian days or meals according to individual needs or vows. Again, we can easily find examples of this practice in novels from the late imperial period (Hawkes, 3.488). A more sympathetic view of meat substitutes sees them as a means for vegetarians to accommodate meat-eaters and entice them to take up vegetarianism themselves.

Meat-Eating Monks and Attacks on Vegetarianism

As we have seen, vegetarianism had an enormous impact on the daily lives of monks and nuns in China and on many lay Buddhists as well, but for ordinary people vegetarianism never became the norm in China, any more than the monastic practice of chastity did. While some meat-eaters might respect vegetarianism as an admirable custom too difficult for them to practice themselves, others attempted to point out what they saw as absurd or even pernicious in the practice. Anti-Buddhist polemical literature often criticizes the moral character of Buddhist monks and nuns, insisting that, while they pretend to adhere to high moral standards, including avoidance of meat, in reality they secretly consume meat just like everyone else. And the corrupt meat-eating monk is a stock figure in Chinese literature, most famously represented by the raucous adventurer Lu Zhishen 魯智深 of the popular Ming novel *Water Margin*. Less common than criticisms of monks for not keeping their own rules, are arguments that directly challenge the propriety of vegetarianism itself. The influential twelfth-century thinker Zhu Xi, in a lengthy essay criticizing Buddhist beliefs and practices, at one point takes on vegetarianism. Taking as his reference a passage in which Mencius encourages his followers to be "sparing with creatures," Zhu writes:

> The Buddhists and Daoists claim to have insights, but they see nothing more than emptiness and extinction. Their views truly are empty, truly little more than pointless extinction. I do not know what it is that they see! There is nothing closer than the relationship between a father and child, yet they abandon father and child; there is nothing more weighty than the relationship between a ruler and his subject, yet they reject ruler and subject. All in life that is moral and indispensable, they dispense with. What is it that they see! The sages said "Be attached to your parents, but benevolent toward the people; be benevolent with the people but sparing with creatures"[27] Yet [Buddhists and Daoists] are not attached to their parents, insisting instead that the people "spare" creatures.
>
> [In the writings of the sages] to be "sparing" with creatures means to eat according to the seasons and use with restraint. "Once having seen them alive, [the gentleman] cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh."[28] In mid-spring, one should not use the female beasts in sacrifice, or musk-deer or eggs; one should not kill an embryo or unhatched thing. This is all that is meant [by being "sparing" with creatures].
>
> But Buddhists instead do not eat meat or other "unclean" foods. They even go so far as to cast themselves before tigers! What reason is there to all this! (*Zhuzi yulei*, 126.3014)

The reference at the end of the passage to stories of monks (and indeed the Buddha in previous lives) sacrificing themselves in order to feed wild

animals underscores Zhu's chief criticism of vegetarianism: that it shows a lack of proportion in the distribution of compassion and a failure to accept the natural hierarchy in which humans are placed securely above animals in the general order of things. Chinese were to see a more extreme form of this view some centuries later with the arrival of Christian missionaries who found the widespread practice of vegetarianism among Chinese Buddhists abhorrent since it represented to them a waste of resources provided for man by God (Reinders 2004, 146–69).

Less carefully reasoned, though probably more important for the history of Chinese vegetarianism, were the suspicions of the state during the Song and Ming dynasties, which sent out edicts condemning what it called "Vegetarian Demon Worshippers" (Chikusa 1982, 199–260). The criticism was not directed at self-professed Buddhists, but instead at popular cults that had, perhaps under the influence in part of Manichaeism as well as Buddhism, adopted a vegetarian diet.

A more subtle, Buddhist critique of vegetarianism is reflected in stories in Buddhist sources of monks who openly eat meat.[29] Unlike the corrupt monks of lay literature, these meat-eating monks are said to be figures of high attainments. In general, they are marginal, mysterious men (I know of no stories of meat-eating holy nuns), "holy fools," unkempt and ill-mannered, looked down upon by more orthodox monks who condemn them for eating meat and drinking wine. But in the end, they reveal themselves to be men of great insight and spiritual powers. Just why accounts of meat-eating monks appear in collections of biographies that otherwise emphasize the importance of vegetarianism remains something of a mystery. A part of the answer lies in antinomian strains of Buddhist thought in China that hold that for those of truly high attainments, all moral distinctions are seen to be mutually dependent and dispensable. The key to cultivation is not so much outer practice as it is the state of the mind when one acts. As the tenth-century monk Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽, analyzing the five basic precepts, put it, "If you can cut out your own heart and liver as if they were made of wood or stone, then you can eat meat; if you can drink wine as if you were drinking urine, then you can drink wine; if you look at an attractive man or woman as you would look at a corpse, then you can engage in sex; if you view your own belongings as you view offal, then you can steal" (*Wanshan tonggui ji*, 3.993b).

In this case as in most other Buddhist writings on the subject, the rejection of vegetarianism is chiefly rhetorical. Writers draw on an extreme example to show that self-cultivation depends primarily on the mental state of the practitioner rather than on his acts. The most outwardly pious monk may in fact disguise a base, corrupt level of internal cultivation, while even monks who commit the most heinous, immoral acts may be operating, if they have cultivated themselves spiritually, on a superior moral plane. In other words, Buddhist authors use meat-eating as a trope to emphasize the importance of mental and spiritual cultivation and are not really advocating the rejection of vegetarianism. Once vegetarianism became the norm,

I know of no prominent Chinese monks who openly admitted to eating meat. Nonetheless, because most vegetarian rhetoric in China focused on the karmic consequences of meat-eating and its implications for self-cultivation, and gave little emphasis to the welfare of animals, pronouncements on the importance of the "mind" in determining the ethics of meat eating allowed Buddhist laymen the option of dismissing vegetarianism as the petty ethics of those enmeshed in outward appearances.

Conclusion

At this point, the reader may well question the extent to which the preceding account tells the story of *Buddhist* vegetarianism as opposed to a more general Chinese vegetarianism. Vegetarianism in China was, to be sure, closely linked to Buddhist concerns of karma and rebirth and was, after the sixth century, practiced most rigorously by monks and nuns. But in addition to the influence of a certain set of Buddhist scriptures, the pre-Buddhist Chinese tradition of abstention from meat during mourning and pressure from the laity played decisive roles in the wholesale adoption of vegetarianism by the Chinese Buddhist clergy. Nor can any of these factors be isolated as a principal motor of Buddhist vegetarianism. Many self-professed Buddhist laypeople from medieval times to this day openly eat meat. And though originating in India, the doctrines of karma and rebirth were already so widespread in the medieval period as to no longer be the provenance of Buddhism alone. What is more, at various points in Chinese history, debates over vegetarianism were closely linked to concerns over ritual sacrifice, mourning, politics and medicine; Buddhist ethics were but one factor among many.

Nonetheless, while a distinctively Buddhist vegetarianism is little more than an ideal type, this should not obscure the important role of Buddhist ideas and practices in the development of the rich stew of culture, religion, and taste that make up Chinese cuisine—a stew in which vegetarianism has, for more than a millennium, been a distinctive and potent ingredient.

Notes

1. Other contributions of Buddhism to Chinese cuisine include the introduction to the everyday Chinese diet of sugar (Kieschnick 2003) and tea, as discussed by James Benn in chapter ten in this volume.
2. For an overview of attitudes towards meat-eating in Indian Buddhism and their ethical implications, based chiefly on Pali texts, see Harvey (2000), 157–65. Lambert Schmithausen is currently preparing a book-length study of Buddhist vegetarianism that draws on a wide variety of sources, including Sanskrit, Pali, and Chinese.
3. *Shi song lü*, 26.190b. A similar passage occurs in the Chinese translation of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* (*Si fen lü*, 42.872b), as well as in the less influential *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (*Mishasaibu hexi wufen lü*, 22.149c). These texts survive only in these fifth-century Chinese translations. There are no Indian versions extant.
4. *Shi song lü*, 26.186b; *Si fen lü*, 42.868b. The *Si fen lü* differs only in its explanation of why monks should not eat dog meat, saying that if monks were to eat dog meat dogs would despise them and bark when they drew near. Neither text gives a reason for not eating human meat.

5. The argument was that insects were often inadvertently killed in the press used to make sesame oil, and that silkworms were killed in the manufacture of silk.
6. *Fo shuo daban niepan jing*, 3.868c–69a. Similar passages can be found in another Chinese translation of the sutra, *Daban niepan jing* (4.625c), which notes that monks can use eating implements that have been touched by meat as long as they wash them properly. Unlike Faxian's translation, this version says that when the meat cannot be separated from other foods, the monk should not accept it.
7. *Lengjia abaduoluobao jing*, 4.513c. D. T. Suzuki (1932), 211–22, translates the relevant passage from a Sanskrit version of the text. The section is discussed briefly in Suzuki (1930), 368–71.
8. Two other texts, though ultimately less influential in China than the three I mention above, also contain passages calling for complete vegetarianism. They were translated respectively in the early and mid-fifth century: *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing*, 1.1081c; and *Yangjue moluo jing*, 4.540c–41a.
9. On the theme of purity in Buddhist vegetarianism, see Kang (2001), 15–46. Notions of purity are important in vegetarianism of other times and places as well. Manicheans, perhaps in part under Buddhist influence, adopted a vegetarian diet out of a belief that meat contained darker, heavier elements, as opposed to plants which were thought to be lighter and purer. Further afield, in ancient Greece, Pythagoras, in addition to insisting on a vegetarian diet, also eschewed beans for the flatulence they produce, a mark of impurity. Orpheus and his followers insisted on a similar diet for the same reasons. See Burkert (1985), 301–02. For a concise, readable survey of vegetarian thought throughout the world, including discussion of vegetarianism in ancient Greece and in Manicheanism, see Spencer (1993).
10. *Daban niepan jing* (T. no. 374), 11.432c; see also T. no. 375, 11.674b.
11. *Fanwang jing* 2.1005b; *Lengjia abaduoluobao jing*, 4.514a–b.; *Ru lengjia jing*, 8.562b.
12. *Daban niepan jing jijie*, 11.427c–42. The influential monk Huisi (515–77) also notes the importance of vegetarianism in passing in his *Zhufa wuzheng sanmei famen*, 2.638b.
13. *Puyao jing*, 533b. See also *Chuyao jing*, 617c, 623c, 637b. References to meat abstention during six days of each month appear in other scriptures as well. The origin and development of this practice has been studied in detail in Liu (2002).
14. Allusion to *Zhuangzi*; Watson (1968), 51.
15. Translation based on *Nan Qi shu*, 41.733–34, which is translated into Japanese in Suwa (1988), 66–72; another version of the letter with some variants appears in *Guang hongming ji*, 26.293a–b.
16. "Jiujing cibei lun"; translated and discussed in Mather (1988), 163–66.
17. Two works place Emperor Wu's vegetarian campaign in the context of his broader political and ritual reforms. See Janousch (1998) and Yan (1999).
18. Lavoix (2002), 116–17; references to the close relationship between Shen Yue and Xiao Ziliang appear throughout Mather (1988).
19. For the chronology of Emperor Wu's relationship to Buddhism, see Lavoix (2002), Yan (1999), Suwa (1988), and Janousch (1998).
20. What follows is based on *Guang hongming ji* 26, 298c–303c.
21. As Yuwen Yong's posthumous name, Wu Di, is identical to that of the Liang emperor of the same name, here I use his given name. What follows is recorded in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, 23.631c.
22. Liu (2002) demonstrates that the "ten days" mentioned in the edict originated in Daoism, though this later came to be considered a Buddhist tradition.
23. The earliest reference I have been able to find to a vegetarian restaurant is in the description of the city of Hangzhou in the thirteenth-century *Meng liang lu*, 16.268–69, which lists a variety of vegetarian specialties such as "fake-meat buns" served at such restaurants. The twelfth-century *Dongjing menghua lu* (4.27) mentions restaurants that serve "tea with vegetarian snacks, just like the vegetarian fare of monasteries," but does not specify exclusively vegetarian restaurants.
24. "Da Li Daqing Xiaoji shu," 12a, cited in Tao (2001), 210, which includes discussion of attitudes toward vegetarianism among literati during the Northern Song.
25. *Song gaoseng zhuan*, 11.771c–72a. Biographies of Gao (which do not mention his vegetarianism) can be found at *Jiu Tangshu*, 182.4703 and *Xin Tangshu*, 224.6391.

26. Such is the case in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, in which one member of the Jia family, Jia Jing, is not invited to a family feast because he does not eat meat (though in his case he was a vegetarian for Daoist rather than Buddhist reasons). See Hawkes and Minford (1973–86), 2.576.
27. From *Mencius*; Lau (1983), 192.
28. From *Mencius*; Lau (1983), 55. The phrase ends with the line, "That is why the gentleman keeps his distance from the kitchen."
29. I discuss accounts of meat-eating monks in Kieschnick (1997), 51–63. For a thorough analysis of the most famous meat-eating monk, Jigong 濟公, see Shahar (1998).

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Abbreviation

T. = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankai, 1927–37.

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CHAPTER TEN

Buddhism, Alcohol, and Tea in Medieval China

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Late medieval China (Tang 唐 dynasty, 618–907) witnessed a relatively rapid change in drinking habits as alcohol increasingly made way to tea as the drink of choice at all levels of society. This shift cannot be understood without appreciating the fact that Buddhists were active not only in changing people's attitudes toward intoxicating substances, but also in spreading tea drinking throughout the empire. Till the middle of the eighth century, tea was known as a regional speciality of South China, but by the end of the ninth century it had become a vital component in the economy and in everyday life throughout the empire (Ceresa 1996). Alcohol, which was drunk not only for personal pleasure but also to strengthen social bonds and for ritual purposes, was faced with a rival for the first time in Chinese history.

Buddhists and Daoists had enjoyed a long association with tea in the South, but it was not until Lu Yu's 陸羽 (733–804) compilation of the *Cha jing* 茶經 (Classic of Tea) and the dissemination of tea drinking by itinerant Chan monks that tea culture became widely popular. Tea was important for maintaining long periods of meditation, but like alcohol it also provided inspiration for poets and had well-known medicinal qualities. The new beverage brought with it a certain sobriety and clearheadedness and also profoundly affected networks of knowledge and the very ways in which ideas were exchanged.

Since people's attitudes and worldviews are often tied to the commodities they use, it ought to be possible to trace the cultural shift from alcohol to tea through surviving texts. We shall now sample a wide variety of medieval Chinese texts of different genres in order to show how Buddhist ideas both drove and were affected by this cultural shift.

Buddhism and Tea

In some ways it is possible to see attitudes to alcohol in Tang society as a line that strictly demarcated Buddhism from the native tradition: Buddhists

vowed not to consume alcohol, and this vow was part of their identity. Buddhist attitudes toward tea were much more positive, and although they did not erase the Buddhist distinction, they decisively moved the cultural discourse away from negative characterizations of alcoholic intoxication toward eulogies to the stimulus of tea. "Civilization," notes William Ukers in his seminal study of tea, "has produced but three important nonalcoholic beverages—the extract of the tea leaf, the extract of the coffee bean, and the extract of the cacao bean," and perhaps it is more than mere chance that a religion in which temperance was considered vital to spiritual life was to be so active in development of tea (Ukers 1935, xiii). We know that the use of tea spread remarkably rapidly from the composition of the *Cha jing* in about 760 to the first tax on tea in 780; within a couple of decades it had grown from the drink of southerners and Buddhists into a daily necessity and a major commodity throughout the empire.

The role of religion in this change is apparent even in the life of the *Cha jing*'s author. Lu Yu was an orphan and was brought up by a Buddhist monk (Ceresa 1990, 9–15). In his youth he was a comedian, and his first literary production was a joke book that he compiled. After the success of his more sober work on tea he became part of a literary circle that included the monk-poet Jiaoran 交然 (730–99), whose works were popular in his own day, although he is less read now than other Tang poets. So influential was the *Cha jing* in spreading tea drinking throughout the empire that Lu Yu was called the God of Tea and tea dealers made clay effigies of him (*Xin Tangshu*, 196.5612).

From the variety of surviving poetry and prose of the middle to late Tang period we know that tea was invested with great religious and cultural significance. To appreciate how tea was understood in the medieval world we must cut across a broad range of literary materials: elite and popular poetry, plays, treatises, official and private histories, liturgical texts, and monastic regulations. In the realm of knowledge exchange and aesthetics the new commodity had a particularly noticeable effect. The aristocratic drinking party as the primary locus for intellectual and cultural exchange among the elite had previously effectively excluded monks and devout laypeople from participating because of the precept against alcohol. Tea drinking however allowed monks and literati to meet on the same field and to share in the same aesthetic values. Monks and scholars thus discovered and promoted a mutually acceptable common ground in their new drug of choice—a popular and effective stimulant with few side effects. While tea could be cultivated in sufficient volume for relatively large-scale consumption, it was presented in literature as a rare commodity that appealed to connoisseurs. Tang writings about tea credited the drink with providing the inspiration and energy necessary for both composing poetry and meditation. Because the rise of tea was paralleled by the emergence of a new and distinctive mode of Buddhist practice and rhetoric, the two became intertwined in the cultural imagination and tea drinking was understood to be almost synonymous with Chan. Tea also affected the transformation of

China's sacred landscape at both the popular and elite level. In the medieval period and afterward, pilgrimages to mountain monasteries that grew their own tea were vitally important in the spread of tea culture. Some Buddhist and Daoist monasteries in late imperial China owned vast plantations and were major players in the economy (Robbins 1974, 138).

The documents that I consider here are drawn from different genres and they all touch on aspects of the transformation of Chinese society from one centered almost exclusively on alcohol to one that was also based on tea. Yet none of them describes this "alchemy of culture"; rather we must put together the story from the mosaic-like pieces. Although Buddhists might not have consciously pledged themselves to transform the drinking habits of the empire, they were closely involved along every step of the way. Buddhism was the shared belief of many writers of Tang dynasty temperance tracts and so close was the association between tea and Chan that they became, for some at least, indistinguishable—in the words of the popular saying, "Chan and Tea have but a single taste," (*Chan cha yi wei* 禪茶一味). This association (if not the actual expression) can be dated with some confidence, I think, to the mid-eighth century. Certainly, by the twelfth century at least, Chan monastic codes contained rules that specified exactly how to conduct tea ceremonies for distinguished visitors (Yifa 2002, 129–31).

Although one could certainly approach the topic of Buddhist influence on beverage culture from the perspective of the *longue durée*, it might be worthwhile to begin with a close look at a single medieval document. By doing so, we may see how some medieval people perceived the two beverages of alcohol and tea and what cultural and religious values were associated with each.

A Debate Between Mr. Tea and Mr. Alcohol

The *Chajiu lun* 茶酒論 takes the form of a verbal battle between the two characters of Mr. Tea and Mr. Alcohol. Each competes to show why he is the superior beverage, until a third party unexpectedly enters the arena and wins the debate. The text was evidently a popular work and was not transmitted as part of the higher literary canon. It survives only by chance, preserved in a small number of manuscripts recovered from the Dunhuang caves.[1] We know nothing about the author, Wang Fu 王敷, save that according to the preface he was a *xianggong jinshi* 鄉貢進士, that is, a candidate for the advanced scholar degree nominated by the local government. He was, then, a person of some status in Dunhuang society and was probably conversant with the fundamental texts of the medieval literary tradition. This short text seems to be Wang's only extant work and although we cannot date it precisely, it appears to have been composed some time between the mid-eighth and late tenth centuries.

After a brief preamble in which the author sets the scene for the verbal joust, Mr. Tea begins the debate by throwing down the gauntlet:

> All of you, don't make a row and listen to me a little! I am the chief of the hundred herbs and the heart of the ten thousand plants. I am called Mingcao 茗草 ("Tender Herb") and named Cha (Tea). People send me as tribute to the houses of the five marquises, and present me as a gift to the families of emperors and kings. From time to time I am offered to [the court] and all my life I enjoy prosperity and splendour. Naturally, I am the superior and honourable, and what need is there to say anything else in praise of my merits. (Chen 1963, 274–76; tr. modified)

Let us ponder Mr. Tea's opening salvo. His claim to supremacy rests first and foremost on his exalted position in the herbal kingdom. He is the chief herb, the master of plants. Perhaps because of his status, tea is a costly gift which is suitable not just for the nobility but for the imperial court itself. Mr. Tea's claim is no idle boast, but accords with what other contemporary authors said about the value of tea in late Tang times. The collection *Bai shi liutie* 白氏六帖 (Mr. Bai's Six Categories) says that tea was not for common people, but was a suitable tribute for an emperor (*Bai shi liutie*, 207). Indeed, although the real age of imperial tea connoisseurship did not begin until the early eleventh century, by the early ninth century, even nomadic rulers were apparently knowledgeable devotees of Chinese tea (Ceresa 1996, 19).

Mr. Tea argues initially from his position as a luxury comestible. Although he does not mention it, we know that this position was one that tea had acquired relatively recently. Mr. Alcohol's response, on the other hand, stresses his venerable antiquity, marshalling episodes from Chinese history to parade in his defence:

> What a ridiculous speech! From ancient times till now, tea has been disdained while alcohol has been honoured. After a goblet of wine had been sprinkled in the river, soldiers of the three forces [of Chu 楚] could all become drunk.[2] When emperors and kings drink me they give their courtiers [the right to speak] without fear. When the various courtiers take me they shout, "Long live [the Emperor]!" I am used for pacifying the dead and for settling [the minds of] living beings, and even the spirits are pleased with my grateful odours. When people are entertained with alcohol and food, bad intentions are always absent. [When people drink] alcohol, there are drinking games that reveal human love, justice, propriety, and wisdom! (Chen 1963, 278–79)

Mr. Alcohol's spirited response appeals to a set of virtues which any competent medieval essayist should have been able to work in to his writing: historical precedent, the principles of true kingly government, and the positive power of ritual in maintaining human harmony. While not delving all the way back in time to the mythical origins of alcohol, he claims that

alcohol has been an actor in the great dramas of the past (cf. Poo 1999). The medieval logic that drives Mr. Alcohol's argument is that anything belonging to the past ought by that very fact to be worthy of veneration.

We can infer that while tea may be a suitable tribute product it is alcohol which actually allows imperial government to function. Mr. Alcohol suggests, on the one hand, that rulers are more amenable to advice and remonstrance from their officials if they have had a drink. Those same officials, on the other hand, need alcohol with which to toast their emperor's health and so make a public show of their loyalty. The claim concerning the receptiveness of the emperor to criticism may have just been a generalized hope, but there were certainly well-known instances of the large-scale toasting of emperors. For example, when Han emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 206–195 BCE) restored order in the empire all his subjects toasted his health for a day (*Shiji*, 99.2723; Poo 1999, 15).

Significantly, Mr. Alcohol makes a strong claim for the vital importance of alcohol in rituals for the dead. The use of alcohol in a ritual context is attested in the oldest written sources that we have, and the practice continued to be maintained in the medieval period. In the oracle bone inscriptions alcohol appears to be the only liquid that was offered—along with a variety of animal sacrifices—to deities and ancestors (Poo 1999, 17). For medieval families alcohol was a necessity for the correct performance of rituals for ancestors.[3] It is telling that Mr. Alcohol explicitly links the power to pacify the dead and the ability to settle the living. If we reflect on how alcohol was used in traditional China (and indeed elsewhere) to reinforce social bonds and create a sense of community it is clear that these two aspects are intimately related not only theoretically but also in practice.

As for the "drinking games" that Mr. Alcohol mentions at the end of the passage above these were well-known in Tang China, although whether they revealed "human love, justice, propriety, and wisdom" as he claims is open to question. In addition to texts on drinking, we know from Tang artefacts that alcohol, literature and elegant conversation were often combined. The popular yet refined game of "*Analects* Jade Candle" (*Lunyu yuzhu* 論語玉柱)—in which participants decided on their drinking quota by the selection of lots containing passages from the sayings of Confucius—offers a case in point.[4] Many of the features of aristocratic drinking parties were adopted and adapted from the customs of earlier ages.[5] Displays of literary erudition and spontaneous poetry composition were the order of the day. As Donald Harper notes in his study of *Analects* Jade Candle, many of the rules of Tang drinking-games were lost by the Song, so perhaps the pleasures of drinking were accorded less weight in post-Tang elite society.[6]

The sole surviving Tang work on drinking customs is a treatise by the ninth-century writer Huangfu Song 皇甫松, "Days and Months in the Realm of Drunkenness" (*Zuixiang riyue* 醉鄉日月) (Edwardes 1937, 191–92). Huangfu's work contains such useful advice as how to build an "Inebriation Tower" (*zui lou* 醉樓). The need to make a tall wooden structure that one might climb up in order to enjoy the view and escape the

mundane world without the inconvenience of climbing a mountain perhaps indicates the persistence of some ancient tropes of shamanic flight in the more sophisticated aristocratic environment of the Tang.[7] In any case, as Mr. Alcohol shows us, in medieval times the ritual functions of alcohol were not sharply distinguished from its social pleasures.

The next stage of Mr. Tea's argument is based on the rarity and price of tea as a luxury product: he says that people cross mountain ranges to obtain it, they purchase slaves just to work their tea plantations and they store the precious tea powder in gold and silk containers (Chen 1963, 279). The transports of the tea merchants are so heavily laden with tea that they cause a tremendous din (Chen 1963, 280). Again, Mr. Tea seems to be insisting that he is superior on purely economic grounds. In other words, tea should be regarded as a precious commodity because it is one. It is the inherent worth of tea that drives people to obtain it, cultivate it, and move it across the empire.

Mr. Alcohol responds to the hustle and bustle of the medieval tea trade with the names of famous medicinal tonics (Zhou 酎, Ganhe 乾和, Boxing 博興, Boluo 博羅, Putao 蒲桃, and Jiuyun 九醞), wines that are drunk exclusively by immortals ("Jade" [Yu 玉] and "Amber Sap" [Qiongjiang 瓊漿]), or emperors ("Chrysanthemum Flowers" [Juhua 菊花] and "Bamboo Leaves" [Zhuye 竹葉]), and the wine that made the Lord of Zhao 趙 drunk for three years. He reiterates the claim about the social role of alcohol, saying that it is offered to neighbours to show courtesy and served at the headquarters of an army to resolve differences and moreover that these uses have been attested since antiquity. To this, Mr. Tea replies,

> I, Mingcao, am the heart of the ten thousand plants. I am either as white as jade or as yellow as gold. Famous monks, bhadantas [elder monks] and recluses in Buddhist monasteries all take me while making discourses, for I can clear away their dullness and weariness. Tea is offered to [the future buddha] Maitreya and dedicated to [the bodhisattva] Avalokiteśvara. Over the course of a thousand or even ten thousand *kalpas* the various buddhas are pleased with me. Alcohol can bring forth ruin and separation of family [and cause human beings] to do a lot of lascivious and depraved things. (Chen 1963, 280)

In this passage Buddhism is closely associated with tea in a number of ways. Mr. Tea reiterates his claims about tea being the chief among plants, and the inherent value of tea as reflected in its visual similarity to precious substances such as gold and jade. Next, he attributes some special functions to tea—it keeps monks awake, and it is a particularly appropriate liquid offering to buddhas and bodhisattvas. Textual evidence for the latter practice in the Tang has proved surprisingly scarce, but we do have the magnificent silver tea ware that was donated by the Tang imperial house to the monastery Famen si 法門寺 and excavated from the relic crypt in the 1980s (Karetzky 2000–01). The material evidence does suggest that tea was used

as a ritual offering in Tang times. As for the ability of tea to stave off sleep and its utility in doing so for Buddhist monks in particular, these qualities had been noted by the earliest observer of tea as a national drink rather than a regional speciality. It was during the Kaiyuan 開元 period (713–742) that this association between Chan monks and tea was made. In the "Record of Things Seen and Heard by Mr. Feng," we read,

> Southerners like to drink [tea], but at first few northerners drank it. In the Kaiyuan reign period there was Master Demon-Queller (Xiangmo 降魔) of Lingyan si 靈嚴寺 on Mount Tai 泰山. He strongly propagated the teaching of Chan. In the study of meditation he emphasized not sleeping, and also not eating in the evening. So he allowed all [his followers] to drink tea. People adopted it from them, and everywhere they boiled and drank [tea]. (*Fengshi wenjian ji*, 6.46; cf. Kieschnick 2003, 267)

According to this contemporary account tea was definitely a novelty in the North until one Chan monk started the craze for the drink as part of his religious teachings.

To return to Mr. Tea's argument: he links together the benefits of tea—which he conceives of in Buddhist terms—with the beginnings of his argument against alcohol (alcohol is detrimental to family life), which we shall see him develop below.

Mr. Alcohol counters—perhaps in response to Mr. Tea's earlier claim about the intrinsic value of the drink—that tea is in fact a cheap commodity when compared to wine. He says that a big jar of tea is worth only three cash. He continues to stress the venerable antiquity of alcohol and its use in great banquets and entertainments of the past. No one, he says, would be willing to sing and dance for just a cup of tea. Then, perhaps rather surprisingly, he focuses on the health related aspects of drinking tea. He warns of the dire consequences of overdosing on tea:

> To drink tea is only to get backache. [If one] drinks too much, one will be sick in the stomach. If one drinks ten cups in a single day one's intestines will be like a drum. If one were to drink it for three years one would certainly have [the appearance of] a frog and get abdominal dropsy as a result. (Chen 1963, 281)

Although green tea is almost universally regarded as healthy these days, it seems that in Tang times, Mr. Alcohol was not the only one to denounce the new substance as an inherently dangerous drug. The *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (New Tales of the Great Tang) informs us that the Right Rectifier of Omissions Wu Jiong 毋煚 (fl. late eighth century) wrote a "Preface Against the Drinking of Tea" (*Dai yin cha xu* 代飲茶序), some time during the Kaiyuan period. Although the work sadly no longer exists,

an abstract survives which begins thus:

> [Tea] cleans out what is stagnant or blocked up, but the benefit lasts only for a single day and is only temporary. It weakens the *qi* 氣 and violates the essence (*jing* 精) so that the accumulation of harm to the body is indeed great. If [people] obtain any improvement [in their health] they attribute it to the power of tea, but if there is some misfortune, they don't say it is the fault of the tea. Isn't it rather that when good fortune is close at hand it is easy to realise it, but when ill-fortune comes who [dares] see it or speak of it? (*Da Tang xinyu*, 11.166; *Taiping guangji*, 143.1028)

Although Wu Jiong and Mr. Alcohol attribute slightly different symptoms to tea, they are equally vehement in their characterisation of tea as a dangerous substance.

As the battle continues, Mr. Tea again boasts of his fame and fortune and then takes on Mr. Alcohol with accusations about the intoxicating effects of strong drink.

> You, Mr. Alcohol, make people intoxicated and muddled. Having drunk alcohol, people become garrulous. In front of commoners on the street at least seven out of ten drinkers ride home on the backs of [their friends]. (Chen 1963, 281)

Mr. Alcohol keeps the discussion away from intoxication and squarely in the realm of culture, returning again to his themes of history and ritual. He claims that the sayings passed down from antiquity credit alcohol with the ability to nourish life, drive away worry, and cultivate wisdom. He repeats his assertion that tea costs less than alcohol (three cash for five bowls as opposed to seven cash for half a glass). Alcohol is necessary for courteous treatment of one's guests. He adds that alcohol is vital for the correct performance of music at state functions, "if [the musicians] drank tea all morning, they [would not] dare to touch their instruments even a little" (Chen 1963, 282).

Mr. Tea concludes his argument by pointing out some types of human behaviour associated with drunkenness. He says that men do not go to wine shops until they are fourteen or fifteen (presumably implying that alcohol is an acquired taste). He alludes to the Buddhist story of the Indian "sheng-sheng" 生生 bird (Skt. *jīvajīvaka*) which lost its life because of alcohol.[8] He disputes the charge that tea causes illness and says rather that it is that alcohol causes drinking diseases. Citing yet another Buddhist example, he refers to King Ajātaśatru, crown prince of Magadha at the time of the Buddha and son of King Bimbisāra, who killed his parents because of alcohol.

Because of alcohol, he says disapprovingly, Liu Ling 劉伶 (d. after 265) became drunk for three years. Liu was one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and author of the famous poem "Eulogy on the Virtues

of Wine" ("Jiu de song" 酒德頌).[9] Finally, he concludes with more everyday examples. Ultimately, he says, the drunkard inevitably ends up under arrest:

> The magistrate will ask him to pay some fines. The big cangue is put round his neck and the timbers on his back. Then he will burn incense [promising] to give up alcohol. He will repeat the name of the Buddha and beg Heaven for mercy. (Chen 1963, 283)

Mr. Tea. appears to strike hard with a message that combines tea drinking with temperance. But in the end the argument is won by neither Mr. Tea nor Mr. Alcohol. It is resolved by the appearance of Mr. Water who proclaims his superiority as one of the Four Elements (interestingly he refers to the Buddhist concept of the four gross elements rather than the native tradition of the five phases) and as the source of both tea and wine. Mighty though he is:

> I do not call myself capable and sainted, so what need is there for both of you to argue about your merits? From now on, you must be friendly and co-operative, so that wine shops will be prosperous, while tea houses will not be poor . . . and if people read this text they would never suffer from being mad with alcohol or tea! (Chen 1963, 284)

The drinking and ritual use of water in medieval China is a fascinating topic in its own right, but one that would take us too far afield here. Instead, we should explore the context in which the battle between tea and alcohol developed.

Buddhism and Alcohol

In the *Chajiu lun* Buddhism stands behind many of the arguments that Mr. Tea makes against drinking alcohol. Let us now examine the background to some of these Buddhist ideas. Statements which condemn drinking to excess can be found in the Confucian Classics but any larger concept of "temperance" in medieval China is most likely to have been of Buddhist inspiration. We can examine this concept from three perspectives: (1) worldview; (2) precept; and (3) practice. By "worldview," I mean such issues as the values ascribed to alcohol and to intoxication in medieval China. From what types of activity and discourse were Buddhist monks and laypeople excluding themselves by not drinking alcohol? Were the positive values attributed to alcohol too deeply ingrained in Chinese culture to be countered completely by Buddhist propaganda? As for "precept," we shall see how Buddhist prohibitions against the consumption of intoxicating substances were defined in the scriptures. In practice, we shall discover that the rhetoric of Buddhist texts did not always accord with the realities of life in a medieval monastery.

To examine these issues we can draw on a wide range of sources: the chapter on alcohol and meat from the seventh-century Chinese Buddhist compilation *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (A Grove of Pearls in a Dharma Garden) and other Buddhist texts; the poetry of a Buddhist layman; a text on ethical behaviour; and the records of lay Buddhist societies and monasteries from Dunhuang.

Positive Values of Alcohol in Medieval China

Although alcohol has certainly contributed to European cultural history there is probably no equivalent in the Western canon of a group of esteemed culture heroes such as the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove," for whom the pursuit of intoxication was almost a holy mission.[10] Nor is there a text which equates with what one might call the "alcoholic utopianism" of a text such as Wang Ji's 王績 (585–644) *Zuixiang ji* 醉鄉記 (The Record of Drunk-Land).[11] In the literature of early medieval China there was a common association between intoxication and spiritual freedom—the "free and easy wandering" extolled by Zhuangzi. As noted in our discussion of *Chajiu lun*, alcohol was used in communication with the extra-human world, it was a necessary component of state ritual, and was also required at rituals for weddings, births and funerals.[12] Alcohol was offered explicitly so that the spirits should become drunk (Mao, 209). Even in the relatively refined language of Tang poetry we catch the occasional echo of the kind of shamanic intoxication which belonged to a much earlier manifestation of Chinese religious life (Schafer 1977, 136). Major poets such as Wang Wei 王維 (701–761) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) who were undoubtedly sincere believers in Buddhism also wrote numerous poems about the joys of drinking.[13] Bai in particular frequently lauds both alcohol and intoxication, although he also wrote a good deal about tea.[14]

In medieval China, the state also played an occasional role in attempting to regulate alcohol manufacture or consumption, although it is more or less impossible to gauge the effects of these measures. Aside from a couple of edicts promulgated by the emperors Gaozu in 619 and Suzong 肅宗 (756–762) in 758, most regulations concerning alcohol which were promulgated during the Tang were mainly concerned with taxation on alcohol, and maintaining the state's alcohol monopoly.[15] In fact Tang emperors seem to have done more to encourage drinking than to restrict it. Great public drinking festivals called *pu* 酺 (bacchanals), which originated in the Han, were revived under the Tang in order to celebrate military victories, or the birth of an imperial heir (Schafer 1965, 130–34).

If literati-poets, such as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and their later imitators, distinguished themselves from those who were politically powerful by indulging in heavy drinking and drug-taking, Buddhists in general distinguished themselves by the disciplined control of what they ate and drank. In the aristocratic milieu of the Six Dynasties and the Tang, alcohol acted not only as social lubricant and muse but also provided a common

field of interaction for educated men (and more rarely for educated women).[16] It was from this arena that Buddhists would presumably have found themselves excluded by virtue of their precept against alcohol. Buddhists' attitudes to alcohol probably brought them up against non-Buddhist cultural values more than, say, their attitudes toward sex, meat, music and, dancing, which were also constrained by precepts.

Precept, Alcohol, and Intoxication: The Buddhist Position

Although any assault on alcohol during the Tang came primarily from the Buddhist quarter, one should not entirely rule out other intellectual and religious positions—that of Daoism for example. It is true that Sima Chengzhen 司馬承貞 (647–753), Shangqing 上清 patriarch and advisor to Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–755), did caution against alcohol in his *Zuowang lun* 坐忘論 (Discourse on Sitting in Oblivion), but many other Daoist texts recommend consumption of alcohol in moderation.[17] A search of a representative collection such as *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel)—a Song compilation of earlier sources—provides no evidence of any coherent and widely attested condemnation of drinking in Daoist sources equal to that found in Buddhist materials. Daoist prohibitions of alcohol, where they can be found, often seem to be imitations of Buddhist models.[18]

The proscription of drinking intoxicating substances is basic to the practice of Buddhism throughout the world. The precept against consuming alcohol is one of the five precepts observed by laypeople (*youpose wujie* 優婆塞五戒, Skt. *upāska pañca śīla*): not to kill, not to steal, not to partake in illicit sex, and not to drink intoxicating beverages. It is also one of the ten precepts taken by novice monks and nuns, one of the forty-eight bodhisattva precepts, as well as one of the vinaya rules for monks and nuns. According to the *prātimokṣa* (the rules recited by monks every fortnight), the consumption of intoxicating liquor by a *bhikṣu* (*biqiu* 比丘, fully-ordained monk) was classified as *pātayantika* (i.e., a wrongdoing that could be expiated by confession).[19] However there is evidence which suggests that in fifth-century China there was a certain amount of anxiety concerning both the handling and consumption of alcohol which meant that this rule was interpreted more harshly than perhaps intended. It was the fact that the laity also vowed not to drink which seems to be the cause of problems concerning the classification of the transgression of drinking alcohol. But given that the notion of abstinence from alcohol had no native antecedents it is perhaps not surprising that precepts scriptures aimed primarily at the laity and produced in China made such a great issue of it.[20]

Alcohol in Fayuan Zhulin

The *Fayuan zhulin* compiled by the monk Daoshi 道世 (ca. 600–683) is a fascinating but under-used source for the study of Tang Buddhism and

social history. It is the largest, most exhaustive, Buddhist "encyclopaedia" that survives in the Chinese canon. Its chapter ninety-three gives by far, the fullest account of Chinese Buddhist attitudes towards drink, at least as they were understood by a late seventh century monk of scholastic bent.[21] This chapter also appears as fascicle seventeen of Daoshi's twenty-fascicle compendium *Zhujing yaoji* 諸經要集 (Essentials of the Scriptures), which unlike his longer work was intended primarily for monks and nuns. The chapter is entitled "Jiu rou pian" 酒肉篇 (Chapter on Alcohol and Meat) although the two topics are in fact treated quite separately. It collates much canonical material and provides a context for the interpretation of the statements of other commentators on the precept against alcohol.

Daoshi describes alcohol as a "doorway to laxity and idleness." He says that the Buddhist saints knew that it was a cause of suffering and therefore avoided drunkenness and forsook drunken friends.[22] Nevertheless, the consumption of alcohol is something that has to be considered in context, and there are times when "by drinking alcohol one avoids a greater transgression." Daoshi cites here some related passages from the *Weiceng you yinyuan jing* 未曾有因緣經 (Scripture on the causes and conditions of the future, T. 17.754.585a18–586b16). First, Prince Jeta (*Jietuo* 祇陀) complains to the Buddha that of the five precepts he finds the precept against drinking alcohol hard to keep and he fears that he may have committed a wrongdoing. He explains that he has in fact been drinking with some of the powerful chieftains of the country, but that he kept the precept in mind while he did so. The Buddha reassures him and says that if everyone were like him, there would be no problem with them drinking all their lives. It is just that people tend to create bad karma when they drink (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.971a7–12).

Next, Daoshi relates the story of how King Prasenajit is prevented from killing his chef in a fit of anger by the timely intervention of his wife Mallika. Mallika first lies to him and then distracts him with alcohol, meat, make up, music and dancing, and sex—despite having taken in front of the Buddha himself the eight precepts that prohibit these acts. The King is puzzled by her breaking of six of the eight precepts and questions the Buddha who tells him that there is no offence because of the merit she accrued by preventing a murder (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.971b18–20).

Another story tells how King Prasenajit averts the threat of civil war in his country by throwing a banquet where he serves alcohol to the warring parties, who forget their differences over a few drinks. By selecting these cases, Daoshi shows his reading of the precept: alcohol is permitted as an expedient in cases where getting drunk causes people to forget any evil intentions. In the three examples from this text, under certain circumstances the Buddha explicitly condones the consumption of alcohol by laypeople (kings and queens in these instances) who have taken either five or eight precepts.

Nevertheless, there are texts in the canon which prohibit drinking alcohol under any circumstances. Daoshi brings together some of these. First, in

the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (Four part Vinaya) the Buddha says, "As for my disciples not even . . . a drop of alcohol from the tip of a blade of grass shall enter their mouths."[23] Daoshi comments on this, "How much worse is the case of drinking a lot. Each swallow causes bondage." However, the next passage, from the scholastic treatise *Chengshi lun* 成實論 (*Satyasiddhiśāstra*, T. 32.1646.300b18–22) tells us that drinking alcohol is not defined as a true wrongdoing since it does not directly cause harm to living beings but is only an underlying cause of wrongdoing.

In the scriptures there are many lists of the karmic consequences that ensue from consuming alcohol. They particularly lay heavy emphasis on the misery to be endured by the drunkard and his/her family in the present life rather than on punishment in hells and suffering in lives to come. The *Youpose jie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (*Upāsakaśīla sūtra*, T. 24.1488.1048b9–16) lists five losses (*shi* 失): loss of wealth, ill health, bad reputation, stupidity and, after death, descent into hell where one suffers "the bitter grief of hunger and thirst without limit." The *Chang ahanjing* 長阿含經 (*Dīrghāgama*, T. 1.1.70c3–5) gives a list of six losses: the loss of wealth, the rise of disease, quarrelling, having a bad reputation around town, the sudden arising of desire or cruelty, and daily damage to one's intelligence. The *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, T. 25.1509.158b8–c1) lists no less than thirty-five losses, which the *Fayuan zhulin* does not reproduce. The thirty-six losses of the *Shamini jie jing* 沙彌尼戒經 (*Śramanerika śīla sūtra*, T. 24.1474.937b12–17) are only partially listed: losing the way (both metaphorically and literally) broken homes, danger to the body, failure to venerate Buddha, dharma, and Saṃgha, inability to chant the scriptures, and being ignorant in successive incarnations.[24] Stupidity is a common theme in these lists and appears again in a verse from *Dasazhe niganzi suoshuo jing* 大薩遮尼乾子所說經 (*Mahāsatyanirgrantha sūtra*, T. 9.272. 340c20–24), which also says that alcohol causes one to lose one's accumulated merit.

The legally-minded Buddhist authors had to consider every possibility connected with strong drink, even the case of making or accepting a gift of alcohol. The *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (*Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā*, T. 26.1521.56c12–17) is cited to explain that a bodhisattva may give a drink to someone who needs it, out of charity, but that later he/she should teach the recipient to give up alcohol, and to concentrate on developing wisdom instead. As Daoshi concludes, "If a lay Bodhisattva gives alcohol it is definitely not a wrongdoing" (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.972b12–13). We may note here that his verdict explicitly contradicts that of the *Youpose jie jing* which says, "The bodhisattva . . . never gives alcohol, poisons, swords, spears and so on to people no matter whether they have attained self-mastery or not" (T. 24.1488.1055a4–5).

The *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (Scripture of Brahma's net) is a fifth-century Chinese apocryphon that had wide-reaching effects throughout East Asia (Groner 1990). Although the bodhisattva precepts contained therein are generally considered to be more lenient than the precepts of the monastic Vinaya, the precept concerning alcohol carries an extremely harsh

karmic penalty:

> If, with your own hand, you pass a beaker of alcohol to someone who drinks it, then for the next 500 incarnations you will be born without a hand. So how much worse would it be if you had a drink yourself? (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.972b14–15; *Fanwang jing,* 2, T. 24.1484.1005b6–8)

This dire karmic punishment appears in the second of the forty-eight minor precepts of the *Fanwang jing*. The fifth of the ten major precepts (which, in imitation of the Vinaya, are termed "*pārājikas*" [offences entailing defeat, i.e., explusion from the saṃgha]) is as follows:

> If a disciple of the Buddha trades in alcohol himself or teaches someone else to do so, or is the cause, condition, dharma, or karma, of trade in alcohol [he is *pārājika*]. He may not deal in any alcohol whatsoever. This is because alcohol gives rise to the causes and conditions of wrongdoing. A bodhisattva is supposed to induce wisdom in living beings, if on the contrary he produces in living beings a mind which backslides, then this bodhisattva is *pārājika*. (*Fanwang jing,* 2, T. 24.1484.1004c8–12)

Thus, we can see that in the Chinese version of the bodhisattva precepts, which applied to the laity as much as to the saṃgha, the precept against alcohol carried much more weight than in the Indian Vinaya. We may suppose that as with the promotion of vegetarianism in Chinese Buddhism, the laity were actually the impetus for change (Lavoix 2002).

Some texts concerning alcohol, such as the *Fanwang jing*, are specific to Chinese Buddhism while others are known in other Buddhist traditions too. These two types of scripture stand side by side in Daoshi's collection, reinforcing each other. An example of the latter is the story of the monk Svāgata and the *nāga* (serpent deity), a central text in the Buddhist proscription of alcohol that is attested in all the Vinayas.[25] The story runs as follows: having rid a town of an unwelcome *nāga* by means of an impressive display of advanced magic, Svāgata accidentally gets drunk when he is given some alcohol "the colour of water" at a meal in his honour. The next morning, when the Buddha finds the unfortunate bhikṣu unconscious outside the monastery gates, he lectures the other monks on the dangerous ability of alcohol to reduce even the spiritually advanced to total incapacity.

One question that may have crossed the minds of many medieval Chinese is whether there is alcohol in the heavens. According to the scriptures, there is indeed alcohol for those fortunate enough to be reborn in King Yama's heaven and for those who can visualise it, at least according to the *Zhengfa nianchu jing* 正法念處經 (*Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna sūtra*). However, this is no ordinary alcohol—it is made from transformed karma rather than distilled from grain, consequently it does not intoxicate (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.973a1–16). Even the pleasures of this heavenly

alcohol are not to be trusted. A bird called "Eternal Happiness" sees the gods drinking and sings a warning that drink deludes the mind. King Yama also chants a verse chastising those drinkers who have fallen into hell.[26]

We noted in the *Chajiu lun* that alcohol was used as medicine. Daoshi comments on the appropriate use of such tonics. According to him, "it is necessary to be really ill and in serious trouble," before one can take alcohol as a medicine and he discourages the reader from falsely quoting scripture in order to get a drink (*Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.973c2–3).

Daoshi concludes his survey of alcohol with a passage from the *Apidamo da piposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (*Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*), in which the disciple Śāriputra is insulted by a non-Buddhist mendicant, who believes that he has found some kind of spiritual insight through alcohol (T. 27.1545.541a–b2; *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.974a6–23). They exchange verses which describe the quality of their insight and Śāriputra clearly emerges as the victor.

This brief survey of the textual material available to learned medieval Buddhists shows that there was no shortage of material at hand for a campaign against intoxication. While there were obviously a few loopholes in the regulations, overall the karmic consequences of drinking alcohol were paraded at length and in fairly stark terms. Materials produced in China were among the least tolerant in this regard.

Alcohol in Dunhuang Materials

While the *Fayuan zhulin* gives some insight into the kinds of materials that would have been known to mid-seventh century metropolitan monks, ideas about alcohol could appear somewhat different in texts from other sources. We may detect both more fanatical and more laissez-faire attitudes. One particular Buddhist manuscript from Dunhuang, *Dafangguang huayan shi-e pin jing* 大方廣華嚴十惡品經 ("Great extended flower ornament scripture of the ten evil categories," T. 85.1359b–1361a) is unequivocal in defining not drinking alcohol as a cardinal virtue of the Buddha's true disciples. Despite its title, the scripture in fact concentrates on only three evil acts—drinking alcohol, eating meat, and not respecting fast days. It begins by enumerating five means of cultivating virtue: not killing, not behaving licentiously, not drinking alcohol, not eating meat, and always practising compassion. Then the Bodhisattva Kāśyapa asks the Buddha,

> "What the world-honoured one has preached is that those who have accepted the Buddha's teaching should not drink alcohol?" The Buddha replies, "All those beings who do not drink alcohol, these are my true sons and are not ordinary people but good sons . . . Those who have received the precepts, whether they received the five precepts, or the two hundred and fifty precepts, or the complete precepts of dignified deportment, none of them are allowed to drink . . . If a monk or a nun breaks this *prātimokṣa* [rule], then they will go to hell.

> If a lay person breaks [this rule] and does a wrongdoing which is *duṣkṛta* [a minor misdeed], then they will be in hell for 80,000 kalpas . . . Those who have received my precepts may not pour drinks for other people, may not enter wine shops, encourage other people to drink, or ferment liquor with others . . . They may not pour drinks for monks. If they do then for 500 lifetimes [they will be born] with no arms. They may not ferment liquor with monks. If they do then for 500 lifetimes they will be deaf; their hearing will be cut off; they will never hear sound or speech. If they force a monk to drink they will fall into *raurava* hell.[27]

This text amplifies those arguments against the drinking and manufacture of alcohol which were a feature of the fifth-century precepts scriptures, which we discussed earlier. If this fiercely teetotal attitude typified some kind of popular Buddhist movement which the Tang state or metropolitan monks viewed as dangerous, this could possibly account for the absence of discussion about trade in alcohol in the *Fayuan zhulin*.

Aside from indigenous Buddhist scriptures and the *Chajiu lun*, there are other materials from Dunhuang which will help us to round out our view of attitudes to alcohol. *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教 (The Elder's family instructions) is an undated compilation of moral aphorisms. It would appear to have been widely read as it was used as a primer for the education of children from the Tang through the Song.[28] It contains a number of moral arguments against drinking alcohol which are not explicitly Buddhist, although they do seem to have been inspired by Buddhist ideas.

Drinking alcohol is the first of the three moral lapses (*san cui* 三衰 [the others being adultery and robbery]), and a cause of poverty (Demiéville 1982, 841). Or it is the fourth of the ten evils (*shi-e* 十惡), again a cause of poverty and low social standing.[29] Alcohol (along with sex) makes people unhappy: "Thirsting for alcohol and running after beauty [women] is the first fault" (Demiéville, 843). "Taking to drink and running after women is the first stupid thing" (Demiéville, 851). Drinking causes harm to the body: "Drink can destroy the body—(so) do away with it" (Demiéville, 857). Alcohol is "the drug that makes one crazy" (*kuang yao* 狂藥) and makes people behave crudely.[30] Alcohol makes men act belligerently (Demiéville, 689). Alcohol is forbidden to young people: "When your boy grows up, don't let him start drinking alcohol" (Demiéville, 689). One should avoid drunkards: "The sage shuns intoxicated guests," and "The superior man dreads drunkards" (Demiéville, 811).

As our knowledge about the *Elder's Family Instructions* is extremely limited it is impossible to tell when these arguments against alcohol were first articulated. Although they probably derive from Buddhist sources, they have been recast in non-Buddhist language, and ascribed to an ancient Chinese sage rather than the Buddha. We do have some evidence then that Buddhist ideas about alcohol made some inroads among Chinese who were not devout Buddhists.

Rather similar in style and tone to the Elder's maxims are some verses by the Tang Buddhist poet Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 (Wang the *Brahmācarin*). His dates are unknown but his name and quotations from his poetry appear in early-ninth-century Buddhist texts, which would indicate that he was active in the late eighth century.[31] His epithet indicates not his nationality, but his pious identification with the ideals of a Buddhist layman (Demiéville 1982, 7). A number of his poems use explicitly Buddhist arguments against drinking.[32]

1. There is a karmic retribution for drinking alcohol:
   The retribution for drinking alcohol is degradation,
   It's like a person falling into a pit of dung.
   You should know that is a place where there is impurity,
   So how can you walk around on the edge of it? (Demiéville, 405)
2. Drinking prevents one from earning a living:
   Drinking alcohol prevents you from earning a living,
   Gambling will ruin the family.
   Just look at those who are in that state,
   Soon they will be brought low. (Demiéville, 367)
3. The manufacture of alcohol is forbidden:
   Making alcohol is a serious wrongdoing.
   Selling meat is no trivial matter.
   If someone does not believe my words,
   Then let them look it up in the Nirvana Sutra. (Demiéville, 407)

These poems would provide conclusive evidence of a notion of abstinence from alcohol based on Buddhist teaching and promoted as a cardinal virtue of the pious layperson were it not for the inclusion of the following poems in Wang's corpus, which rather undercut his statements of the value of temperance:

1. Even if you are not a slave in your most recent incarnation,
   You will be working in your next life.
   Better to warm up some wine
   And spend some time getting drunk with your friends. (Demiéville, 227)

Rather perversely then, the Buddhist notion of reincarnation appears in this verse in order to justify the comfort of getting drunk.

2. When you really think about it,
   Everything is insipid and tasteless.
   Better to take comfort in your worldly mind,
   And from time to time get falling-down drunk. (Demiéville, 309)

Again, advice to take comfort in the worldly mind is perhaps not what we would expect from a Buddhist poet.

3. From time to time enjoy getting drunk on your own,
   When you've emptied the pitcher, fill it up again.
   Your only concern should be to stay drunk a long time,
   For your companion, call on Liu Ling. (Demiéville, 463)

Once again, Liu Ling, the patron saint of refined drinkers makes his appearance. It seems that even for the most pious of laymen, alcohol had positive cultural associations which were impossible to ignore and which broke to the surface even in "Buddhist" poetry.

But were Buddhist monks and laypeople in fact as assiduous in avoiding alcohol as the prescriptive texts would have us believe? The household accounts of Buddhist monasteries and the statutes of lay societies preserved among the Dunhuang manuscripts indicate that drinking alcohol was not just a vice that was occasionally indulged in by monks and laypeople. On the contrary, it seems to have been a significant, even defining feature of the religious practice of lay Buddhist societies, and part of the everyday consumption of a Buddhist monastery, at least at Dunhuang.[33]

Communal eating at vegetarian banquets seems to have been the most significant feature of the everyday practice of lay Buddhists at Dunhuang. Lay Buddhist societies clearly had their roots in those peasant associations which formed in order to make sacrifices of food and alcohol to the God of the Soil (Gernet 1995, 262). According to ancient custom, participants in these banquets were required to contribute to them. Members of both types of society, Buddhist and agricultural, paid dues, had their principal meetings in spring and autumn, feasted together, and drank alcohol together. The evidence from stele inscriptions, Dunhuang materials and biographies of monks shows that these lay associations were a feature of popular religious life from the fifth century into the Song dynasty (Gernet 1995, 248–77). Each member was obliged to attend and to provide specific quantities of flour, oil, and alcohol. Failure to attend meant that the person would be fined, usually a measure of alcohol.[34] These societies often included members of the saṃgha, who were apparently subject to the same statutes.

A number of household accounts from four Buddhist monasteries at Dunhuang have been preserved and it is possible to reconstruct the monthly consumption of alcohol for one of them at least.[35] The amount of the annual budget for alcohol could be as much as nine percent of the total (Trombert 1999–2000, 136). Monasteries at Dunhuang both purchased alcohol and made it themselves (Trombert, 137–47). The monastic accounts also record occasions for which alcohol had to be purchased specially, usually to greet the arrival of senior monks from elsewhere, or to receive government officials. Alcohol was consumed on festival days, such as the Buddha's birthday and the ghost festival (Trombert, 159–64). It was also used in religious ceremonies and given to monks in exchange for their labour (physical or spiritual) (Trombert, 164–71). These fascinating historical documents reveal that for the monks in some Dunhuang monasteries at least, alcohol was both a daily necessity, and appropriate for special occasions.

Conclusion

In many ways then, it seems as if Mr. Alcohol was right when he claimed that he was integral to Chinese culture. At least in Dunhuang, it seems that monks and devout laypeople still needed alcohol no matter how much they might have condemned it. Nevertheless from the mid-eighth century, tea did offer a stimulating alternative that could be unambiguously identified with Buddhism. The promotion of tea was indeed coupled with arguments against alcohol that drew on a large and varied body of Buddhist materials. Indigenously produced Buddhist texts that purported to be the word of the Buddha were often considerably less tolerant than materials translated from Indic sources.

The influence of Buddhist temperance tracts on the habits of the empire is one possible explanation for the cultural shift, but perhaps the change in Tang drinking habits reflects a larger change in the *Zeitgeist*. I suspect that the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion of 755 may have played a part in the decline of the drunk poet as a cultural role model and the consequent rise of the positive image of the non-worldly, tea-drinking Chan master. Certainly the literati of the late Tang seem less than carefree figures than their earlier counterparts. The terrible bloodshed and dislocation caused by the rebellion and the comparatively brutal life of the ninth century may have sobered up Tang China even more effectively than any Buddhist temperance movement.

Let me close with a Tang poem, which I think may serve as an appropriate bookend to Mr. Alcohol's and Mr. Tea's arguments.

Tea
fragrant leaves, tender buds.
The desire of poetic guests, the love of the Saṃgha.
Cut and ground white jade, red silk woven on a loom.
Boiled in a pan—the color of yellow pistils, swirled around in a bowl—blossoms of yeast mold.
At the end of the night it invites you to accompany the bright moon, before dawn it makes you face the morning mist.
Washing it down, people of the past and present never tire. Who can make such a claim after getting drunk?[36]

Notes

1. Full copies are found in Pelliot nos. 2718, 3910, 3192, 3716, 3906, and 4040; there are also partial fragments (Stein nos. 406 and 5774). On the *Chajiu lun* see Chen (1963), Ji Yuanzhi (1991), and Lang Ji (1986). The text transcribed by Chen is based on Pelliot 3910.
2. Referring to an episode when the King of Chu (or one of his generals) wanted to share a single goblet of wine with his troops. He threw it in the river and the soldiers drank from its waters. Thus fortified they defeated the forces of Jin. See Chen (1963), 278, n.18.
3. See, e.g., the *Family Rituals* of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) as translated in Ebrey (1993), 157–63.
4. See Harper (1986). Perversely enough, it is in the text of the *Analects* itself that we find Confucius's warning against overindulgence in alcohol. See Legge 1991 (1935), vol. 1, 232.

5. For a Qing monograph on the subject of *jiuling* 酒令 (rules for alcohol), see Yu and Lou (1975).
6. This is not to say that drinking games disappeared entirely. On drinking culture in the Ming, see Wang (1990).
7. This work also reveals that parties in which drinking games were played were modeled on the political administration, with an Illustrious Prefect presiding, assisted by a Statute Registrar and a Sconce-beaker Registrar. For the topmost stratum of Tang society at least, getting drunk was indeed rather a serious business.
8. I am unable to supply a precise reference to the story that the author evidently has in mind here.
9. *Wen xuan*, 47.662. Liu's biography appears at *Jin shu*, 49.1375–76.
10. The best study of alcohol in literati culture in the Six Dynasties is Lu Xun (1981). See also Wang Yao (1986). For a glimpse into this hedonistic milieu see *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 in the translation of Mather (2002), especially 400–32 (chapters entitled "The Free and Unrestrained" and "Rudeness and Arrogance"). On the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove see Holzman (1956).
11. Translated in Giles (1964), 109–10.
12. For examples of the use of alcohol in court ritual see *Xin Tangshu*, chapters 11–22 passim. An example of the use of alcohol in local ritual can be found at *Zizhi tongjian*, 212.6733—a case from the middle of the eighth century when all local officials were required to lay on a formal banquet with music and drink in honor of the most worthy of the long-lived under their jurisdiction. See Schafer (1977), 134–35.
13. On Bai Juyi and Buddhism see Ch'en (1973), 184–239. On Wang Wei as a Buddhist poet see Wagner (1981), 119–49. James Liu for one is not entirely happy with "drunk" as a translation of the Chinese *zui* 醉. As he points out (Liu 1962, 58–60) the *Shuowen* glosses this character as "everyone reaching the limit of his capacity without offending propriety," and he warns against the dangers of taking a poetic convention too literally. Whether a poet's drunkenness is merely "poetic" does not undermine my point here, which is that drinking alcohol in order to get "drunk" was central to the concerns of Chinese high culture up to and including the Tang.
14. See for example his poem, "Drinking on an Empty Stomach with All the Guests" ("Yu zhuke kongfu yin" 與諸客空腹飲), in *Quan Tang shi*, 443.4956, translated in Harper (1986), 70. Bai's self-penned tomb-inscription is entitled "The Biography of a Drunken Poet" ("Zuiyin xiansheng zhuan" 醉飲先生傳), on which see Shinohara (1991).
15. For the two edicts see *Tang Da zhaoling ji*, 108.561–2. For a brief synopsis of the edicts see Zheng Yayun (1984), 48–50. For a much later missionary account of state attempts at prohibition throughout Chinese history, see Ament (1884). Gaozu certainly seems an unlikely candidate for Buddhist influence on his decision to ban butchers and wine sellers, at least if one follows Weinstein's account of his attitude toward Buddhism. Although his edict appears to have been an austerity measure, one cannot rule out the possibility of some conscious effort to co-opt the power of Liang Wudi's famous edict banning butchers and alcohol merchants ("Duan jiurou wen" 斷酒肉文 [Proscription of alcohol and meat] in *Guang hongmingji* 廣弘明集 26, T 52.2103.294b16–21), which was indeed inspired by his personal belief in Buddhism.
16. For an example of an educated woman (in this case a Daoist nun) who did participate in Tang drinking culture see Cahill (2000).
17. *Zuowang lun*, in *Daozang* 1036, 7a–8a; translated in Kohn (1987), 95–96.
18. Note, e.g. abstinence from alcohol by the millenarian rebels known as the "Yellow Turbans." See Zürcher (1972), 254, n. 4.
19. See Pachow (2000), 151, which compares the Sarvāstivāda vinaya against other extant vinaya texts.
20. On the proscription of meat and alcohol in Chinese apocryphal scriptures, see Wang-Toutain (1999–2000).
21. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93–94, T. 53.2122.970b–981a. For a discussion of the *Fayuan zhulin* and the *Zhujing yaoji* see Teiser (1985); Gjertson (1986); Chen (1992).
22. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.970b26–c1.
23. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.972a6–7. Cf. *Sifen lü* 16, T. 22.1428.672a23, "From now on those who take me as their teacher must not even take the tip of a blade of grass and drip wine into their mouths."

24. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.972a24–b1.
25. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.972b16–973a7; *Youpose wujie xiang jing*, T. 24.1476.943b18–944a16. For a comparative analysis of the various versions of the Svāgata story see Ch'en (1946).
26. *Fayuan zhulin,* 93, T. 53.2122.973a25–b15. For a list of hells for those who break the precept against drinking see *Zhengfa nianchu jing* 7, T 17.721.40a–41a.
27. T. 85.2874.1359b–1360a. Partially translated in Overmyer (1990), 208. Wang-Toutain (1999–2000) also focuses on this text.
28. The Taigong of the title refers to Lü Shang 呂尚, alias Jiang Wang 姜望, advisor to King Wen 文王, and later to his son King Wu 武, legendary founder of the Zhou. Surprisingly little attention has been devoted to this text either in Chinese or Western scholarship, but see Demiéville (1982), 17-20. On the use of the text as a primer in the Song see Zürcher (1989), 37 and 47–48.
29. These ten evils (as opposed to the usual Buddhist list) are defined in the text as: ploughing and sowing in the wrong season; using tools without the correct method; going to bed early and getting up late; giving up work and taking up drinking; feeding and raising useless creatures; failing to be thrifty with clothes and food; failing to maintain the roof (of one's house); not maintaining the well and the hearth; lending in the expectation of doubling one's return; lighting the lamp when one is not working.
30. Demiéville (1982), 811. The Buddhist author Falin 法林 writing at the beginning of the seventh century also uses the term *kuang yao* to describe alcohol. See his *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論, T. 52.2110.494a25.
31. See *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 1, T. 51.2075.193a15–26, and *Chanyuan zhu quanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, B, ii, T. 48:412c. On the dating of Wang and the poems ascribed to him see Demiéville (1982), 7–12.
32. References are to the text collated in Demiéville (1982), but see also Vetch (1984).
33. For a revisionist view of monastic practice at Dunhuang—using evidence that monks lived at home, were married, and drank alcohol—see Hao Chunwen (1998). On the consumption of alcohol by Buddhists at Dunhuang, see Trombert (1999–2000).
34. See, e.g., the text of the statute in Gernet (1995), 273; "[the members of the association] shall oblige her as a punishment to supply a quantity of alcohol sufficient for an entire feast."
35. Dunhuang documents that record purchases of alcohol by Buddhist monasteries are Stein nos. 286, 372, 1398, 1519, 1600, 4373, 5039, 5050, 5786, 5830, 6186, 6452; see Giles (1957), 257; 261–265; Pelliot nos. 2032 (verso), 2040 (verso), 2042, 2049, 2271 (verso). The two complete examples are the yearly monastic budgets for Jingtu si 淨土寺 for the years 924 and 930, found in Pelliot 2049 (verso 1 and 2).
36. Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), *Quan Tang shi*, 433.4652. In the original at least, this is a figure poem in the shape of a pagoda.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Beef Taboo and the Sacrificial Structure of Late Imperial Chinese Society

Vincent Goossaert

The impact of religious traditions on Chinese food culture is manifold, as is documented in the preceding essays. It ranges from the sacrificial use of food (especially meat) to communicate with the divine, to ritual commensality, to the definition of edible and nonedible foods through ethical and liturgical taboos upheld by religious institutions and specialists. In China, as elsewhere, sacrificial practices and commensality as well as religiously sanctioned food taboos have affected individuals most often through the collective practices and choices of communities of all kinds (such as kin groups, territorial communities, occupational groups, devotional associations, and the like). Throughout history, communities in China have defined themselves by what they did and did not eat, either at certain intervals or permanently. The beef taboo is but a small part of this large array of interactions between food and religion but it is a fascinating one as it touches on all major aspects of such interactions: ethics, sacrificial practices, and purity rules. This essay examines the way the beef taboo was used to delineate communities in late imperial China.[1]

The Beef Taboo

The beef taboo is only vaguely discussed in the existing literature on Chinese food history as well as religious history. However, primary sources that deal explicitly with this taboo are extremely numerous. The beef taboo, usually termed *niu jie* 牛戒, is the moral injunction to not kill bovines or to eat their flesh. Bovines in this context refer to oxen (*bos taurus*) as well as buffalos (*bubalus bubalis*). The geographical distribution of these two species is different, and while the Chinese have always fully distinguished their zoological and dietetic characteristics, for sacrificial and ethical considerations they were treated as similar (see Song 1997).

This taboo, as far as available sources reveal, appears gradually between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. It is first documented in a rich corpus of anecdotes (*bi ji xiao shuo* 筆記小說), and I have identified around thirty-five such anecdotes dating from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Many more can be found in later sources as well as ethical and liturgical texts revealed in Daoist circles during this period (Goossaert, forthcoming, ch. 3). These texts describe the punishments in hells of those who kill bovines or eat beef, and the divine rewards for those who vow to Heaven to never to kill bovines or eat beef. They also document the preaching by zealots and propagandists of this new moral rule and describe the actions of the communities that adopted the taboo. The following is a typical example among these anecdotes:

> Zhou Jie (a military officer) was suffering from an infectious disease; he had to take leave from office and return home. He dreamt that he was arrested and led to a magistrate's court where guards clad in red like regular runners threw him in jail. There were several dozens of people dressed like officials, who greeted him ceremoniously and sat around him to judge his case. A clerk ushered Zhou in and asked him: "How could you be so cruel as to indulge in your taste for beef?" He shouted to runners to lash him on the back and take him away. Zhou turned to the clerk and begged for mercy, saying: "From now on, I will not only ever eat beef again, but furthermore I swear that I will have my entire family respect this taboo". The sitting officials advised that he be pardoned, and the judge agreed to free him and let Zhou go back home. Zhou then woke up from his dream covered with sweat but cured from pestilence. Since then, he has strictly observed this taboo (*jin* 禁) and talks about it on every occasion to those he meets.[2]

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the full development of morality books (*shan shu* 善書), the beef taboo is subsumed and validated within the larger framework of Chinese morality, and numerous morality books provide lengthy discussions on the theology and hagiography of the taboo (Goossaert, forthcoming, ch. 4). The taboo is notably included in fundamental morality books such as the *Wenchang di jun yin zhi wen* 文昌帝君陰騭文 and the *Jue shi zhen jing* 覺世真經. Several sources, such as the late-Ming *Niu jie hui chao* 牛戒彙鈔, are devoted exclusively to it.

Furthermore, various other genres of sources (novels, poetry, theater, anecdotes, popular songs, Daoist and sectarian treatises, newspapers, epigraphy, legal casebooks and magistrates' manuals, archival literature, religious art, rules of lineages and local communities, and the like) provide a rich picture of the observance of the taboo during the late imperial period and portray the conflicts and tensions it caused within local society. The same sources also document additional taboos on other animals that seem

to have developed in the wake of the beef taboo (most importantly dogs and horses, but also frogs, tortoises, and crabs).

Since the beef taboo appears only around the Tang-Song transition, it cannot be considered a fundamental part of either traditional Chinese religious attitudes towards animals and meat, or an original part of Daoist, Buddhist, or Confucian ethical teachings. Although some scholars have tried to relate the Chinese reluctance to eat beef to the Indian sacred cow taboo and a possible Buddhist role in its transmission (de Groot 1892, 479; Anderson 1988, 66–67, 82, 119–20, 177), the sources suggest that this was not the case. In fact, Buddhism appears to have been the least enthusiastic advocate of the beef taboo among all Chinese religious institutions. The appearance of the beef taboo is therefore best explained by placing it within the framework of socioeconomic and religious changes that took place in China between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries.

To understand the meaning of the beef taboo, it is crucial to place it in relation to two other and more ancient norms, namely respect for animal life and vegetarianism on the one hand, and the state protection for draught animals on the other. Respect for animal life and vegetarianism, explored in more detail in John Kieschnick's contribution to this volume, were ethical ideals shared by all three institutional religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism) and were by no means an exclusively Buddhist teaching. As early as the first centuries CE, the care for all forms of life and the abstention from meat were recognized as a major source of religious purity. Abstention was compulsory at certain times during the liturgical calendar (the so-called *zhai jie* 齋戒 purification) and was observed by dedicated persons living in permanent ritual purity, notably clerics (Buddhists and some Daoists) as well as some lay devotees. However, vegetarianism created tensions and contradictions for its practitioners, including the inability to share communal feasts with one's family, colleagues, and fellow villagers, as well as the inability to take part in sacrifices and the consumption of blessed meats (*zuo* 胙). Indeed, while both Daoists and Buddhists have tried to suppress blood sacrifices, they broadly failed in this regard.

Vegetarianism, then, was not a handicap for clerics who had their own "pure" communal meals and sacrificial procedures, but it could be a cause of hardship for laymen who found themselves excluded from social networks that were based on commensality. That is precisely what happened to many members of sectarian movements during the Ming and Qing periods, which accounted for the largest numbers of lay vegetarians in premodern China. Although the late imperial codes aimed to differentiate between, on the one hand, pious individual vegetarianism that was tolerated, and, on the other hand, those belonging to a vegetarian sectarian group, which was outlawed, it happened that magistrates forced individuals suspected of heterodox views to eat pork in public to manifest their orthopraxy.[3] Social pressure worked to similar effect; for instance the celebrated eighteenth-century novel *Rulin waishi* ("The Scholars") tells the story of a scholar who

had to break a longtime vegetarian practice and eat the sacrificial meat offered by his school's director (*Rulin waishi*, 25).

Throughout the Tang, Song, and late imperial period the general ideal of respect for animal life and vegetarianism and the continued necessity for sharing meat during banquets, notably at sacrificial feasts, were in continual tension. Several solutions were designed to accommodate both. One very common solution was to alternate fasting (i.e., vegetarian) days and meat days. A uniform calendar of fasting days for all was observed and even imposed by the state during the Tang (Liu 2002). Later on, many different fasting calendars linked to various cults emerged. In modern China the choice of fasting days (often including days of sexual abstinence) is largely individual: people inform others of their own fasting days by posting a notice on their doors or wearing a badge. Another solution was to shift the emphasis of the purity rules from the consumption of meat to the killing of animals. Hence from the Song period onward, many ethically-inclined people engaged in the practice of releasing living animals (*fang sheng* 放生) and vowed never to kill animals while not being strict vegetarians and allowing themselves to buy meat when there was social pressure or a need to do so (Handlin Smith 1999). Yet another solution to circumvent the tension between abstention and the social requirement to consume meat, I believe, was the beef taboo. By observing the taboo, adepts felt they did their duty toward animals by respecting the most sacred one, thereby maintaining their ritual purity while at the same time continuing to consume pork meat. The rise of the beef taboo is thus a corollary of the advent of pork as the major meat for both sacrificial and gastronomic purposes.

Contrary to the first impression one might gain when reading anecdotes related to the beef taboo, the avoidance of beef was not just a case of observing a general respect for animal life. To be sure, many anecdotes involving the beef taboo have a narrative structure similar to other stories in which former meat-eaters realize the wickedness of their act and convert to abstention (ter Haar 2001). However, the anecdotes dealing with beefeaters are different inasmuch as they conclude with an oath never to kill bovines and eat their meat; other animals usually receive no mention. Furthermore, all texts discussing the taboo, including tracts revealed through spirit-writing from the Song period and later, insist that bovines are different from other animals. While some texts argue that total vegetarianism is preferable over the avoidance of beef, many others openly admonish people to never touch beef but instead eat pork. For instance, one of the earliest revealed canonical texts supporting the beef taboo, a 1316 addition to the autobiography of the god Wenchang 文昌, instructs adepts never to eat beef but only to restrain oneself from killing other animals (*Zitong di jun hua shu*, 4.30b–32a; cf. Kleeman 1994). In later morality books and pious literature, the practice of the beef taboo is often coupled with that of *fang sheng*: adepts of this dual practice never kill animals but do eat pork and other meats bought from butchers, yet they never consume beef. In short it is clear that the beef taboo holds no relation to Buddhism. It was possibly even a reaction to vegetarianism,

that is, a counter-formulation of ethical rules pertaining to animals and meat aspiring to achieve the same goals as vegetarianism, but predicated on a different vision of animal life.

Care and Love for Draught Bovines

Why then consider bovines as animals fundamentally different from others and set them apart as forbidden meat? Like most cultures, people in early modern China identified within the animal world those species fit or unfit for consumption. These choices were influenced by many factors including an animal's perceived distance from humans, its ecological uses, its ritual purity, and its place within symbolical taxonomies. Texts on the beef taboo emphasize one specific feature: bovines work as draught animals, notably in ploughing the fields.[4] They are not only indispensable to agriculture and hence the survival of society, but at a more individual level, they are the work companions that allow people to cultivate fields and survive. Killing and eating them would constitute a blatant violation of the moral rules that put living beings in a relation of reciprocal debt of gratitude. That bovines were necessary for agriculture is amply documented and, ever since the Han, successive dynasties have repeatedly forbidden the slaughter of draught bovines, *geng niu* 耕牛 (Goossaert, forthcoming, ch. 2). Perceived threats to the bovine population, and a subsequent sense of urgency to protect them, increased during the Tang-Song transition. This was due mainly to ecological factors, most notably the demise of Tang-period aristocratic manors practicing animal husbandry on a large scale, and the subsequent decline of the bovine livestock, which, from the tenth century onward, was mostly made up of individual draught animals owned or rented out by families (Xie 1985; Cartier 1999).

By the Song, virtually no bovines were raised for meat in Han areas, even though illegal clandestine beef butchers, belonging to an underworld with its own rules, lived from selling the meat of stolen or old and unfit animals. These butchers specialized in beef and, sometimes, horse meat, and worked in a world separate from the legal (albeit often stigmatised) butchers of pork, ovines and poultry who were organized in officially recognized guilds. Due to the illegal butchers' trade, beef consumption is continuously attested from the Song onward to the modern period. However, such consumption is rarely described as a matter of fact, rather, it is the subject of criticism or ascribed to particular, abnormal situations (Shio 2001). Descriptions of beef butchers as criminals can be found from the Song through the late Qing period, and are best exemplified by a morality play entitled "The Retribution of Bovine Killers" (*Tu niu bao* 屠牛報), authored and staged by a famous moral activist, Yu Zhi 余治 (1809–74). The play portrays the confrontation between a hapless buffalo, a cruel beef butcher, deceptive yamen runners who are bribed to allow butchers to run their illegal business, and a worthy man who fails to convince the butcher to repent.

In the play the butcher ends up dying an awful death, is judged in hell and reincarnates as a buffalo.

Developments in agricultural ecology and economic trends after the tenth century caused bovines to be deployed uniquely for work in the fields. They ceased to be seen as edible. These developments form the major background behind the discourse on the beef taboo. Yet the taboo is not merely a folk transformation of state laws protecting bovines as agricultural assets. Indeed, over a thousand years had passed since the first known state ban on bovine slaughter was issued during the Western Han and the formation of the beef taboo around the ninth century. Furthermore state law never outlawed eating the meat of a dead bovine, and usually allowed the slaughter and consumption of animals unable to work in the fields. In contrast, the discourse on the beef taboo insists that it is a sin to even touch a single part of a dead bovine (and by extension leather, horns, bones, fat, and sinews). It also maintained that bovines that died a natural death were to be provided with a proper burial. An important subset of the taboo literature deals with the difficult choice faced by the peasant owning an old and worn-out bovine: while economic common sense would have a farmer sell his animal to a beef butcher to recover part of the expenses needed for the purchase of a young animal, taboo adepts would encourage farmers to allow the animal to live out its natural life, die in peace and be treated to a decent burial.

Both a sense of gratitude toward an animal that contributes to agriculture and the close relationship between peasants and their draught bovines—similar to the relationship between peasants and their horses in Europe where a horse taboo prevailed prior to the nineteenth century—have greatly contributed to the formation of the Chinese beef taboo. From the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onward, numerous poems as well as folk or elite pieces of drama were composed on this theme. The oldest and most influential among these is a long ballad, entitled "The Bovine Crying for Justice" (*Niu su yuan* 牛訴冤), in which a slaughtered buffalo recalls his life of toil and curses the farmer who sold him to the butcher (*Quan Yuan san qu*, 319–22). Yet, the factors described above are not the only explanation for the persistence of the taboo. Another reason is the taboo's close relation to important changes in sacrificial practice that took place around the Song period.

A Sacrificial Reform

Since high antiquity, bovines had been the most prestigious sacrificial victims. Successive emperors from the Han to the Song had turned the sacrifice of bovines into an imperial monopoly, allowing commoners to sacrifice only sheep/goats (*yang* 羊) and pigs. This monopoly however was widely disregarded up to the early Song, when the sacrificial slaughter of bovines in village temples continued to occur frequently. Yet over the course of the Song dynasty such sacrifices almost disappeared. A few widely publicized exceptions

confirm that the general pattern was to abstain from bovine sacrifice (Nakamura 1972). Rather than attributing this change in sacrificial practice to an increased respect for the imperial monopoly, it was more likely linked to larger developments in temple cult community practices. In the early modern period, the term *san sheng* 三牲 "three sacrificial viands"—traditionally used to refer to beef, lamb, and pork—often began to be used to refer to pork, poultry, and fish instead.

The link between the beef taboo and changes in sacrificial practice is most apparent in Daoist texts that, from the Song onward, develop arguments in favor of the taboo. These texts are mostly products of spirit-writing cults associated with Zhenwu 真武 and other saints. Whereas medieval Daoism, as Terry Kleeman points out in chapter seven, promoted a general abstention from meat, at least during times of ritual preparation and performance, by Song times, Daoists began to emphasize abstention from certain specific animals. Song Daoists advocated abstention from a set of animals known as the "three revolting [meats]" (*san yan* 三厭), namely the wild goose, dogs, and a group of aquatic animals including turtles and eels. By the late Song, beef had been added to the list.[5] It still remains a major taboo observed by many Daoists today (although some schools do not respect it). The *san yan* taboos were also linked to sacrificial practice, notably, that of the wild goose, used in the Confucian wedding ceremony. Daoist texts however present the beef taboo as a rule of ritual purity either required by particular saints such as Zhenwu or by the entire heavenly administration.[6]

As most local temple communities stopped sacrificing bovines, they adopted the beef taboo as a marker of purity. Many Song and later anecdotes put it clearly: those who have eaten beef are unclean and will be attacked by pestilence demons and other causes of death; those who have never touched beef are ritually clean and will be protected by the gods. The link between beef consumption, ritual purity, and immunity from pestilence is already attested in the earliest known anecdote concerning the beef taboo, found in a late Tang collection (*Xuan shi zhi*, 37–38). These prescriptions were not just a recommendation for individual welfare, they were also enshrined in community rules: access to many temples was forbidden to those having defiled themselves with beef. The idea is already clearly illustrated in some Song texts, such as the following anecdote discussing an otherwise well-known Song cult (Davis 2001):

> During the reign of emperor Zhenzong 眞宗 (998–1022) a celestial god came down on earth to take possession of a commoner from Fengxiang [modern Shaanxi province] named Zhang Shouzhen 張守真, and reveal divine words through him. This god was then canonized as Yisheng 翊聖. Zhang Shouzhen was ordained as a Daoist and entrusted with [Yisheng's] cult, for whom a great temple was built. In a radius of a hundred leagues around the temple, those who had eaten beef, or wore bovine leather shoes would without fail be struck by misfortune, some among them even falling dead.[7]

Placards forbidding entry to beefeaters can still be seen in some Chinese temples today. These purity rules linked to the consumption of beef are reminiscent of the situation in Japan, where beef almost ceased to be eaten during the very same period, namely the eleventh century (Taira 2001), and where the taboo was also linked to purity and pollution rules governing the access to shrines (I am however not aware of any evidence that might substantiate a direct link between the Chinese and Japanese taboos).

The Sacrificial Structures of Chinese Society

Most sources, notably the anecdotes illustrating the process of divine retribution and the normative discourse found in morality books, discuss the beef taboo as well as other ethical issues, in terms of an individual person's choice and conduct. Edifying stories describe individuals being punished for eating beef, or swearing never to eat it again and, as a result, being showered with divine favors. But, as with most issues related to purity and ethics, beef consumption was not only an issue to be decided by each individual. In some sources, the beef taboo appears not only as a question of individual morality but also as a social norm that characterized and formed communities, separating those who are pure (i.e., those who abstain from beef) from those who are not. Not only did taboo adepts attempt to encourage entire families, clans, villages, or neighborhoods to engage in a communal oath, but the taboo itself was also inscribed in many community rules.

The rich evidence from the Ming and Qing period allows us to see how the beef taboo functioned as a social marker of religious communities, each with their sacrificial and purity rules. Although the general picture presented here is an extrapolation from a collection of isolated cases, and therefore most likely overlooks regional differences and local habits, I believe a convincing case can be made to argue that most groups adhering to Daoist liturgical services, that is, most temple communities (territorial cults, professional and regional corporations, pilgrimage and devotional associations) observed the taboo.

Who then did not abstain from bovine sacrifice and beef consumption? People reported to eat beef in late imperial sources appear to belong to three categories, each in one way occupying a marginal (though not necessarily a socioeconomically low) position within late imperial society (Goossaert, forthcoming, ch. 5). First, ethnic or religious groups not fully integrated in Han Chinese society were regularly criticized and even attacked for slaughtering and eating bovines. Ethnic groups along the southern frontiers such as the Miao witnessed how the Ming and Qing authorities forcefully tried to impose a ban on buffalo sacrifice. Many among the Chinese Muslims—the Hui—made a living from the bovine slaughter, which caused tensions and even conflicts throughout China. Last but not least, there were the foreigners in the treaty-ports. The beef-eating habits of Westerners, notably in Shanghai, caused outrage among Chinese observers, but also ushered in a lively debate in the late Qing press on the rationale of

the beef taboo (compared by some Chinese to the Western dog taboo). Eventually it caused some radical Chinese intellectuals willing to westernise to abandon the taboo and provocatively eat beef on purpose (Ye 2003, 217–20; in Meiji Japan, eating beef likewise was a strong sign of Westernization/modernization). In all these cases, Chinese authors reporting on southern ethnic groups, on the Hui or on Westerners, presented the beef taboo as a hallmark of Chinese civilization as opposed to foreign barbarism. These tensions probably explain why Western observers in late Qing China were very observant of beef taboo propaganda that was prevalent throughout China (in the form of morality tracts, sermons, illustrated fliers, novels, opera, etc.) and have reported it in great detail (see e.g., Doolittle 1865, 186–91; de Groot 1892).

The beef taboo did not only distinguish the "Chinese" from "outsiders," it also operated as a social marker within Chinese society. A second category of people described as revelling in eating beef were those not well integrated in local society such as rich urban idlers, travelling merchants, homeless vagrants, the military (with its distinct and defiant tradition of beef-eating), and criminals and members of mafia-like underworld organizations. Among the latter were the sellers of beef (mostly obtained from stolen animals), a practice local authorities and charities (*shan tang* 善堂) tried to stamp out with limited success. At least since the Tang, the slaughter of bovines and the eating of beef had been a sign of rebellion or voluntary marginality: in the sixteenth-century novel *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), inns in rebel-controlled territory offer beef and human flesh, whereas those under imperial control offer pork and poultry (Guo 1999).

Finally, we find beefeaters among Confucian fundamentalists—that is, people claiming to practice only those rituals or belong to those religious groups firmly rooted in Confucian canonical sources and refusing to compromise with other religious groups. Since they declined to take part in local religious communities and temple cults that rejected bovine sacrifice, and since the beef taboo itself was deemed to be non-canonical, these fundamentalists continued to sacrifice bovines and eat sacrificial beef. Indeed, the only deity (besides the imperial sacrifices offered to Heaven) known to routinely eat beef in late imperial China was Confucius, and several texts were written to justify this. Confucius, it was said, commanded such spiritual authority that he alone, unlike other gods, and, of course humans, could eat beef without incurring a sin (the argument is developed for instance in the aforementioned *Tu niu bao*). Clearly, a fair number of Confucians who respected the taboo were embarrassed and did not touch or eat their share of sacrificial beef at the end of the twice-yearly sacrifice to Confucius (*ding ji* 丁祭). The dilemma faced by pious Confucians is well preserved in a series of anecdotes dating from the early nineteenth century:

> Beef has not been eaten in my family for generations: this [taboo] has been passed down for over two hundreds years. My father was once returning home after having failed at the metropolitan examinations,

> when he contracted malaria on his way through Zhejiang. Throughout the autumn and winter, he had dozens of fever attacks daily, and was exhausted to the point that he could no longer speak. His own father, seeing that he ate very little, tried to provide him with tasty, energetic foods. Then a friend offered him some beef left from the sacrificial offerings to Confucius; the doctor approved, saying that beef was excellent against malaria and also very good for strengthening the spleen. My grand-father prepared it skilfully and gave it to my father saying: "This is a leftover from the *ding* sacrifice; you can certainly eat it; furthermore, it will cure your disease. There are no objections." My father did not want to ingest it, but he did not dare disobey his father so he gulped down a tiny bit, which he immediately vomited out, following which he was overwhelmed by a violent bout of fever. ("Niu jie" 牛戒, in *Chi shang cao tang bi ji*, 3.54b)

In contrast, a minority of Confucian fundamentalists did eat their "Confucius meat" (*ding ji rou* 丁祭肉), and even sacrificed bovines to other Confucian saints and gods as well as their ancestors. The attitude toward beef then, in addition to being a social marker, was a symbol of one's attitude toward and place within the religious structure of late imperial Chinese society, a structure that was closely related to cult communities, and hence, sacrificial practices. This certainly explains why the beef taboo lost much of its importance when, from 1898 onward, the temple communities were ruined as a result of anti-superstition policies. Nevertheless it remained strong as a marker of an individual's ethical values, as Mao Zedong, impressed by the zeal of Hunan peasants who observed the taboo, observed himself in 1927.[8] Today the taboo is still observed by some traditionally minded individuals. And to this day the Chinese continue to grapple with the distinction—first introduced by the Hui and then by Westerners during the late Qing—between draught bovines and meat bovines (Sun 2001), thereby having to reconsider their traditional ethical categories that separated friendly bovines from edible pigs, ovines, and other creatures.

Notes

1. This essay introduces the basic argument and themes of my forthcoming book-length study of the beef taboo, *Le tabou du boeuf en Chine. Agriculture, éthique et sacrifice* (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Collège de France).
2. "Shi niu meng jie" 食牛夢戒, in *Yi jian zhi*, Yi 乙, 1, 191–92.
3. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Chinese Christian converts were likewise forced to eat pork to demonstrate their rejection of vegetarianism before being admitted to baptism (Malek 2004).
4. The origins of bovine-draught ploughing are debated but most likely it took place around the third and second centuries BCE.
5. See, most notably, *Tai shang shuo Xuan tian da sheng zhen wu ben zhuan shen zhou miao jing*, 3.17a.
6. Most notably the *Xuan tian shang di chui xun*, revealed around 1300.
7. "Yisheng jing Liu Haichan," 翊聖敬劉海蟾, in *Chun zhu ji wen*, 3: 40–41.
8. *Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha baogao* 湖南农民运动考察报告, in *Mao Zedong xuan ji*, vol. 1, 37.

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